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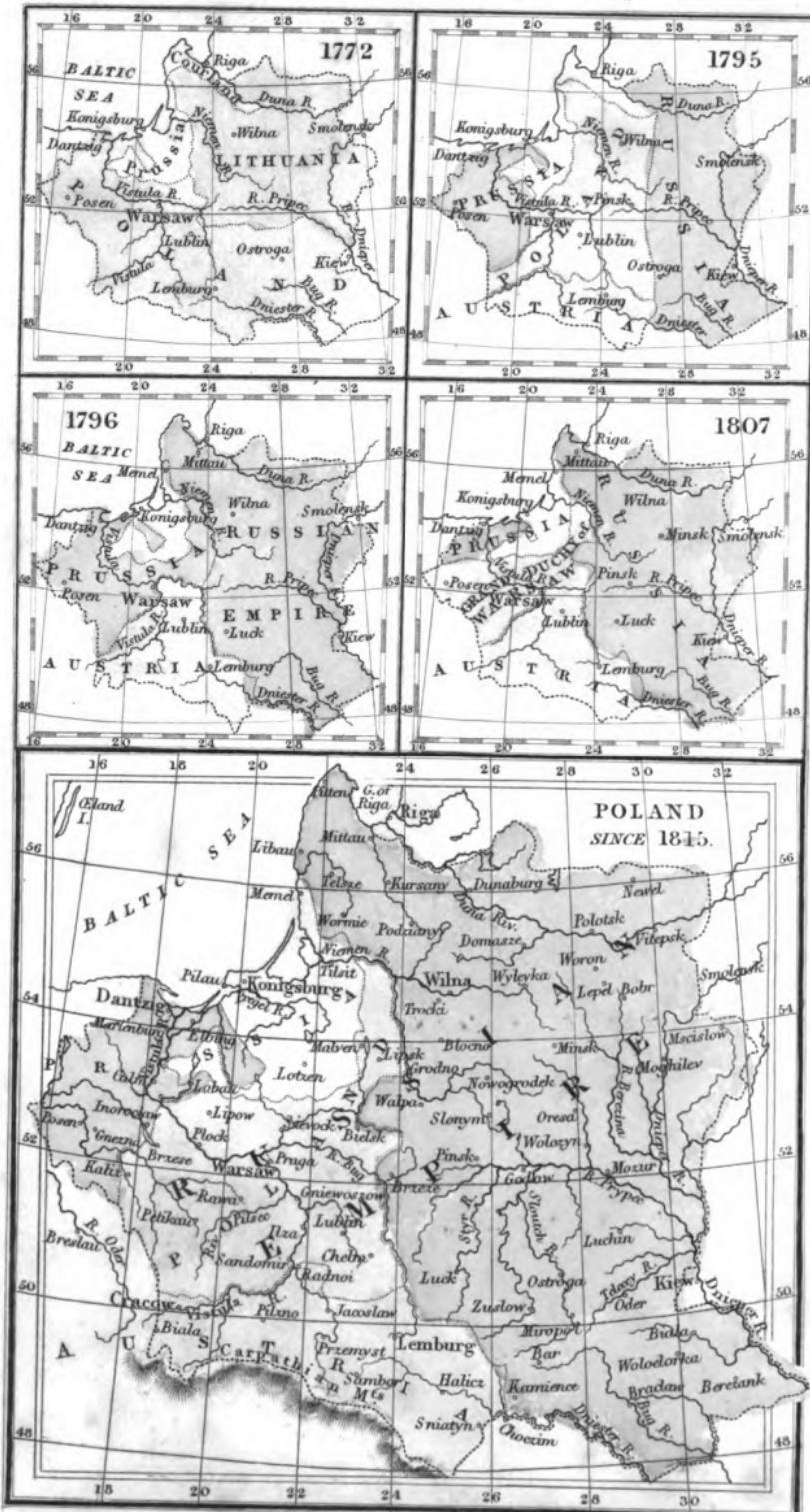
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POLAND IN



THE PARTITIONS OF POLAND.

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HISTORICAL CONVERSATIONS

FOR

YOUNG PERSONS:

CONTAINING

I. THE HISTORY OF MALTA AND OF THE
KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN;

II. THE HISTORY OF POLAND.

BY

MRS. MARKHAM,

AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORIES OF ENGLAND AND FRANCE."



Grand Master of the Order of St. John.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXXVI.

162.

LONDON :
Printed by **WILLIAM CLOWES and Sons,**
Stamford Street.

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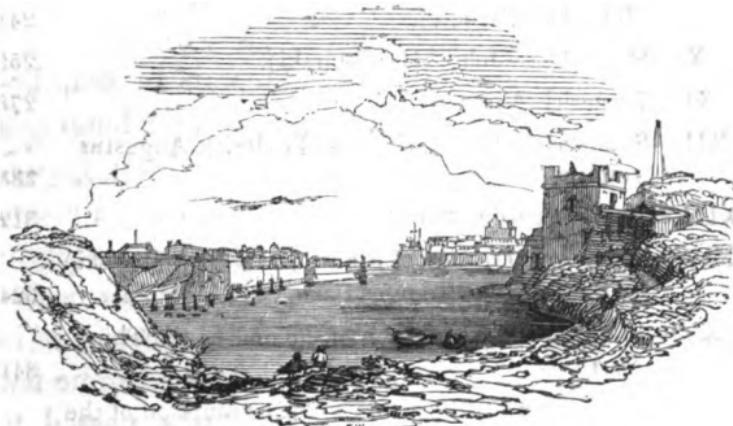
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HISTORY OF MALTA.



*View from the upper end of the Great Harbour of Malta *.*

CONVERSATION I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

Mrs. Markham, Richard, George, and Mary.

Mrs. M. THE island of Malta is a very singular spot, and has been the scene of many most remarkable events. I have, therefore, my dear children, compiled for you a short account of it.

Richard. Thank you, mamma, I can answer, for one, that I shall like nothing better, for I have long wanted to know something of those fine old fellows the “ Knights of Malta.”

* The town on the left is Valetta. That on the right is Victoriosa. The Obelisk on the right is in the Corradina.

Mrs. M. I shall have a great deal to tell you about them, but I have first to give you some description of the island, and then to tell you its preliminary, or earlier history.

Malta is situate in the Mediterranean sea, between latitude 35° and 36° north, and longitude 15° and 16° east, is eighteen leagues from Sicily, and sixty leagues from the nearest African coast. The island has been considered by some geographers as appertaining to Africa, but we Europeans are now pretty generally agreed in placing it in our own quarter of the globe. Indeed some few years since an act of parliament was passed to make it so.

George. That may be very satisfactory to us in England, and I hope it is equally so to the good folks in Africa.

Mrs. M. I dare say it is all the same to them, at least while Europeans retain the possession of it. The island is about twenty miles in length, lying nearly south-east and north-west, and is ten or twelve miles across in its broadest part. The coast presents, on the south-west side, a steep and inaccessible cliff, forming a complete natural defensive wall. The opposite shores are also very rocky, but are indented by many bays and inlets; and Valetta, the capital, has one of the finest harbours in the world. The island is wholly composed of rock, and the soil is consequently dry and sterile.

Mary. O, Mamma, what a dismal place it

must be? How can people contrive to live upon it?

Mrs. M. The fertility which nature has refused has been in some degree supplied by industry. Earth has been brought from Sicily and the nearest African coast, and thus an artificial soil has been formed sufficient for the purposes of vegetation.

Richard. But what an immense labour it must have been to bring all that earth!

Mrs. M. And the mere bringing it was only a part of the labour, for I understand that, to enable the rock to receive this artificial soil, it was necessary in many places to break up the surface. The larger and harder pieces of the stone were used for fences and other purposes, and the smaller and softer bits were beaten till they were nearly reduced to powder. The imported earth was then mixed up with this pounded rock, and the soil thus produced is found to be tolerably productive, at least for a time. Fresh supplies of earth are, however, wanted about every ten years.

Mary. And what sort of plants will grow in this soil?

Mrs. M. Melons and gourds, and other vegetables and flowering plants thrive in it, as well as many kinds of fruit trees, particularly oranges and figs. The sugar-cane is also cultivated, but not in any great quantity. The chief production of the island is cotton, which grows upon a pretty little

shrub, the leaves of which are used as food for cattle. Corn does not grow well in Malta; and the island is almost entirely supplied with that necessary of life from Sicily. The Maltese have a singular way of preserving the corn thus procured, by storing it up in large pits dug in the rock. These pits are lined at the bottom with wood and straw, and when filled with grain are covered with a large stone, cemented, in order to exclude the air entirely, by a sort of mortar called puzzolana. Corn thus secured will keep a hundred years. Some years ago, one of these pits, the existence of which had been forgotten, was found and opened, and the grain, with the exception of a little near the top, was perfectly good.

Rich. And do they keep their corn in this manner now?

Mrs. M. I have been told that the practice was at one time left off, but that it has been resumed with great success since the English have been in possession of the island.

The two great natural deficiencies under which Malta labours are those of fuel and water. There is neither coal nor wood in the island. Almost all the wood that is used for fuel is brought from Sicily, and is sold by the pound, and is therefore, as you may suppose, very dear, and can be procured only by the rich. The poor are reduced to make use of dried cow-dung for this purpose, and the stalks of thistles. Happily the warmth of their climate

prevents them from being often in want of fuel, except for cooking.

Rich. What would the people of Malta do without Sicily? No corn without Sicily, no wood, and not even earth.

Mrs. M. If there were no Sicily, the Maltese must make Africa do instead. It is lucky for them, however, that they can, in fact, draw most of their supplies from their nearer and more abundant neighbour. The sea is often covered by a number of little boats, with two masts and ten or twelve oars, called *sparonaros*, which are continually plying between the two islands.

George. But the water, Mamma: surely the Maltese are not obliged to send to Sicily for water.

Mrs. M. No: but they are obliged to use every means to prevent what little they have from running to waste, and to have recourse to tanks and reservoirs cut in the rock, to preserve every precious drop of rain which falls. There are but few springs, and not a river, nor so much as what may be called a rivulet, in the whole island; and even rain is not frequent. Under this deficiency of water, vegetation would entirely perish, were it not for the copious dews with which the ground is refreshed, more particularly in the spring and summer months.

Mary. How wonderful it is to see how every thing in nature is taken care of in different ways!

Mrs. M. It is so, my dear; and the more we look into nature, the more we shall see how va-

riously the great Creator has provided for all his works. To man he has given the power and also the disposition to find the spot in which he lives, or in which he was brought up, the happiest of any. You cannot but remember those beautiful lines of Goldsmith—

“The shivering tenant of the frigid zone
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own ;
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
And his long nights of revelry and ease.
The naked negro, panting at the line,
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine ;
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.”

In like manner the Maltese finds all that he wants or wishes for on his sea-girt rock, and calls it the “*Fiore del Mondo*,” or the Flower of the World. He has an almost perpetual sunshine over his head, and has honey and fruits in great abundance. To be sure he is obliged to depend on other countries for bread; but he has sheep and goats that feed on the aromatic herbs which are produced on his rock. I have already told you that his rock forms a natural fortification round the greater part of his island, and that he digs out of it his reservoirs and his storehouses. Thus his rock is his world, and he would not change it for the most beautiful paradise.

George. I should think that, with that fine sunshine perpetually blazing upon it, he must find it rather a hot world.

Mrs. M. There is no climate, I believe, which is not adapted to the constitution of the native inhabitants. But, besides this, I am told that in Malta, though the sun is powerful, and the more so because it is reflected from the rocky and sandy soil, yet the heat is so agreeably tempered by sea-breezes as to be very bearable even by the English; and that it is only when the wind blows from the south-east, bringing with it a burning air from the hot sands of Africa, that the climate is distressing. This wind is called the sirocco, and causes a languor, felt by the natives as well as by foreigners. It seldom, however, lasts more than two or three days, and is commonly succeeded by a breeze from the north-west, bringing life and vigour.

Mary. Still I do not think I should like to live in a place that was all rock.

Mrs. M. The general aspect, I allow, does not present anything agreeable. The coast, though steep, is not picturesque: there is nothing grand or fine in any of its outlines. The surface of the country is little varied, and consists of white sandy fields, surrounded by stone fences, and has consequently a very bleak and bare appearance. Here and there are a few sequestered spots, where green trees, not many, nor large, may be seen; and in one part of the island the eye is refreshed by hedges of fig-trees, instead of the usual stone walls.

Mary. Hedges of fig-trees would make amends for a great many disagreeable things. And yet

I am sure that I could never get to like that *eternal* rock.

Mrs. M. Still, however, this eternal rock is not without its wonders and its beauties. Along the coast are innumerable caves and grottos of various shapes and sizes, formed by the action of the sea upon the cliffs, which, having some proportion of magnesia in their composition, are also further affected by the saline quality of the sea. Indeed it is said that the circuit of the island has been materially reduced since the time of the Greeks and Romans, by the work of decomposition which has been thus constantly going on. Amongst the grottos there is one called the Grotto of St. Paul, because, according to the tradition of the island, St. Paul took shelter in it after his shipwreck. In this grotto is a very good statue of the saint, and a part of it has been fitted up as a church, and was used as such by the early Christians.

Richard. I beg your pardon, Mamma, for interrupting you, but I was told some time ago that St. Paul is now commonly thought to have been shipwrecked not at Malta, but on an island in the Adriatic, called Meleda.

Mrs. M. Some geographers have so supposed, and amongst them Mr. Bryant, who wrote a book on the subject, but the more common is, I believe, beyond all doubt the correct opinion. A gentleman, who has resided some years in Malta, observed once on this subject to your Papa, that in the bay now

called St. Paul's Bay, there is a shoal, which causes a kind of rippling of the waves, to which St. Paul's expression of " where two seas met," might apply ; and this rippling would be increased by the wind which is called by the mariners of these seas a Levanter, and which was probably the prevailing wind in the storm that occasioned the shipwreck. The Maltese have also many traditions on the subject, which, if traditions can have any weight, seem to identify this island as the true Melita of the Acts of the Apostles.

Amongst the curiosities of Malta is a subterranean town, a city of tombs, which has been formed by art in the substance of the rock, full twelve or fifteen feet below the surface. This subterranean city is situate in the centre of the island near the Citta Vecchia, the ancient capital, and is now accessible only by a staircase, which descends into it from the house of the rector of the college. Instead of houses and streets, here are galleries leading to an endless succession of cells, each of which is a separate tomb. Some of these cells are large enough to contain a full-grown body : others can only contain that of an infant. It is said that these galleries extend fifteen miles. But only a small part of them is now accessible, the rest being walled up to prevent people from being lost in their intricacies. During the persecutions of the early Christians, this underground city often served them as a place of refuge ; and although so ancient as to

be beyond the reach of history or even of tradition, it is still in a perfect state of preservation.

Mary. But what cities are there now above ground for the present inhabitants?

Mrs. M. There are two cities, Citta Vecchia and Valetta, and innumerable little villages and villas.

Richard. Only two cities! I always thought there were several. At least it is said so in my little book of geography.

Mrs. M. Citta Vittoriosa, Citta Invicta, and Citta Conspicua, as they are called, are close to Valetta, and are defended by the same fortifications, and are, therefore, in a general view of the island, rather to be accounted as *parts* of the same city.

Mary. What a large place then Valetta must be, if it be thus four cities all in one!

Mrs. M. It is, indeed, a very noble place, particularly that part which is most properly entitled Valetta. This is built on a peninsula which juts out into a very large and deep bay, and forms, by dividing it, two of the finest harbours in the world. That to the east, which is nearly three-quarters of a mile in length, is called the Grand Harbour, and contains within it other lesser harbours, all combining to make an admirable place for shipping of every kind. The buildings and towers and fortifications of the other *cities*, as you have seen them called, extend along the shores of this grand harbour, the castle of St. Angelo defending the eastern, and that of St. Elmo the

western entrance to it. The harbour on the west side of the peninsula is less capacious. It is called Marsa Muschetta, and in it is a small island, on which is the Lazaretto, a dismal sort of hospital, or rather prison, in which all strangers are obliged to perform quarantine before they are suffered to enter the port.

Mary. What can that be for ?

Mrs. M. To avert the danger of their bringing the infection of that dreadful disease the plague into the island.

Besides the four towns of which Valetta may be said to be composed, there is also a large suburb called Floriana, from the name of an Italian engineer, who built the fortifications which surround it. Under the walls of Floriana lies buried, aged thirty-six, the charger of the brave Sir Ralph Abercromby, who, as you may recollect, was killed in the battle of Alexandria, on the 21st of March, 1801. This noble horse was at that time fourteen years old, and received two sabre cuts and seven musket balls. He was, however, well taken care of, and recovered from his hurts ; and afterwards came into the possession of an English gentleman at Malta, survived the battle in which he had been wounded twenty-two years, and died in September, 1823. An inscription, commemorating his history, is placed over his grave. At Floriana, amidst the bastions and cannons, and all the rugged features of war, there is, moreover, a little villa belonging to the governor.

The gardens are formed amongst the little intermediate spaces of the fortifications, and are rich and fragrant with geraniums and roses.

George. I think that these pretty gardens would reconcile you, Mary, to this eternal rock. For my part, I should think that Malta must be a very curious and pleasant place, and well worth seeing.

Mrs. M. The fortifications are on so large a scale, that it is said it would require a garrison of 25,000 soldiers to man them completely. Amongst the defences of this island, Mr. Brydone, who visited it in 1770, speaks of mortars cut in the rock itself. He adds that "the charge for these mortars was a barrel of gunpowder, over which they placed a piece of wood, made exactly to fit the mouth of the chamber. On this they heaped a great quantity of cannon-balls, shells, or other deadly materials, and when an enemy's ship approached the harbour, they fired the whole into the air, making a shower of two or three hundred yards round, that would sink any vessel."

Mary. If you please, Mamma, don't tell us any more about those sorts of things, but about the people, and their houses and fine buildings.

Mrs. M. Well then, we will begin with the city of Valetta, which, as I have told you, stands on the peninsula or promontory between the two harbours. This city, instead of being built, like most other towns, at different times, as chance, convenience, or whim directed, was begun and completed on a

regular plan. The streets are wide and straight, the houses are flat-roofed, and have terraces on the top, where the inhabitants spend much of their time, enjoying the sea-breezes and the sea-view. Almost every house has its own reservoir for water, besides which the town has an additional supply by means of an aqueduct nine miles in length, which conveys water from some springs in the interior of the island. There are many convents, churches, and public buildings; but the chief glories of Valletta are the hospital, the palace of the grand masters, and the church of St. John. The hospital was the noblest institution of the kind in the world. It was open to the sick of all nations; and it was the special duty of the Knights, in virtue of their institution as knights hospitallers, to attend in person on the patients. All the vessels used in this establishment were of silver, till the French, during their brief possession of the island, stripped the hospital of every thing valuable, excepting about thirty silver plates, and a few dishes or basins, which are preserved with great care, and shown to strangers as specimens of former magnificence.

George. It would be but handsome if the French would now refund some of those plates and dishes.

Mrs. M. The ships that contained the plunder of Malta never reached France. Two were captured by the English, and the Orient, which had on board the greater part of the spoil, was blown up and sunk in Aboukir Bay.

The palace of the grand master is now the residence of the English governor, and few sovereigns can boast of a more magnificent dwelling. It contains a library and an armoury, both amply furnished in their different ways. The latter is a room 235 feet long, and contains arms for 30,000 men. Round the room are ranged various warlike instruments, and the real armour of many of the knights, some of it inlaid with gold from head to foot. The library possesses the accumulated collections of the knights. When a knight died, his books, by the rules of the order, became public property, and were placed in the library. Some of the apartments in the palace are very large. There are several suites of rooms 220 feet long, and decorated, some with tapestry, and others with paintings representing the valiant deeds of the knights in the Holy Land. The church of St. John is, in its exterior, nothing very striking ; but within all is grand and magnificent, notwithstanding its spoliation by the French. The French could not, however, carry off the greatest treasures of this church, which are the tombs of the knights. The whole pavement is composed of a mosaic of marbles, agates, and jaspers, representing the coats of arms and other insignia of the warriors who repose beneath. Some of these monuments are of incomparable beauty and richness. The walls of the church are covered with paintings, very well executed, representing the different events of the history of St. John the Baptist,

the patron saint of the knights. The saint's hand is preserved in the church with great veneration.

Rich. The hand of St. John the Baptist ! Surely, Mamma, that cannot be possible !

Mrs. M. I only tell the tale as it is told to me. A very dry, brown hand is certainly shown, which was originally in the possession of the Greek emperors. How they got it I do not know. When the Turks took Constantinople, this hand was among the treasures they found there; and it continued to be preserved and regarded with as much veneration by them, as it had been regarded with before by the Christians, until the emperor Bajazet presented it to the grand-master D'Aubusson. The knights carried this precious relic with them in all their wanderings, and on forming their settlement at Malta, deposited it in the church, which they built there in honour of their patron saint.

Citta Vecchia, the other city in Malta, which is called also Citta Notabile, has an imposing appearance from its lofty situation on the brow of a hill, and is a neat town, with good houses. The cathedral is old, and was built in 1455, on the site of an ancient fort; or, as others say, on the spot on which stood the house of Publius, mentioned by St. Paul as "the chief man of the island," in Acts xxviii. 7. The interior is gaudy with gilding and tinsel, but contains some good paintings, by a native artist, of the various incidents relating to St. Paul's stay in the island.

Near Citta Vecchia is Boschetto, which was a country residence of the grand-masters. This is one of the most delightful spots in Malta, and is the only spot where trees grow to any size. The fruit trees in this charming valley luxuriate in the wildness of nature, and are refreshed by springs of fine water, which spread a delicious coolness and verdure all around. The house, which still shows signs of former grandeur, is much out of repair. Formerly, there were courts in which wild beasts were kept, and there was one covered over with brass wire, which formed an aviary for foreign birds. All these are, I believe, gone, but the groves of oranges, lemons, and cedars still remain, and still yield delight to the Maltese; who come here on stated festivals, and spend whole days beneath their shade.

George. Are the Maltese a good sort of people?

Mrs. M. I suppose that, like other people, they have both their good and their bad qualities. I have, however, never heard them accused of any characteristic national vice, nor extolled for any extraordinary excellence. If I may pretend, without having ever been acquainted with a single Maltese in my life, to give an opinion about them, I should say, judging from what I have heard and read, that they are, on the whole, rather an inferior race. Certainly, from some cause or other, perhaps from the defects of their education or their government, they have never attained any con-

siderable distinction. They are, however, obliging and civil to strangers, and appear to live peaceably and contentedly with one another. And, perhaps, that is saying more for them than if I were to say that they are exceedingly clever, or exceedingly brave.

Richard. I suppose that, in their language and customs, they are like the generality of Italians?

Mrs. M. The upper classes speak Italian, and follow also in other respects the habits of Italy; but the lower sorts speak a language of their own, in which the Arabic very much predominates. They are said to be sprung originally from the Arabians, and are still observed to be, in person and features, much more like their African than their European neighbours. I am told that the style of their music, than which nothing can be more inharmonious, also betrays an African origin. The Maltese, even those of the higher class, had formerly many customs peculiar to themselves. Many of these are, from the increasing intercourse with other countries, wearing away. One custom, however, still lingers, which will in some particulars remind you of a story you have read elsewhere. As soon as a child is a year old, the friends of the family assemble in a large room decorated for the occasion, and the child is brought in. If the child is a boy, two baskets are placed before him, the one containing corn and sweetmeats, and the other an ink-stand, a sword, and some trinkets. By the choice

which the infant makes, the parents are said to prognosticate his character, and in some cases to fix his future destination. If he chooses the ink-stand, he is to be a lawyer,—if the sword, a soldier. The choice of the corn is supposed to be indicative of a generous temper.

Mary. And have the little girls no baskets to choose from?

Mrs. M. They are not forgotten, but in their baskets, instead of swords and inkstands, there are needles and other implements of work, and ribands and ornaments.

George. As Malta is such a bare and barren spot by nature, I suppose that it cannot have many plants or animals peculiar to itself.

Mrs. M. I only know of one animal peculiar to Malta. This is a species of dog, with long white hair as soft and shining as floss silk. These dogs were in great request amongst the Romans, and happy was the Roman lady who was so lucky as to possess one. I believe they are now very nearly, if not entirely extinct. When the French had possession of the island, about thirty years ago, their general made a great point of procuring one for his wife, but I do not know whether he succeeded or not. Native birds are, I understand, very rare, probably from the want of trees and shelter; but the island is frequently visited by large flocks of birds of passage, glad to find here a place of rest in their flights from one continent to another. Insects, also,

are scarce. Amongst the few that are peculiar to Malta, is a caterpillar called the mining caterpillar, which lives on the vine, and with its small and delicate teeth works for itself long galleries within the hard wood of the branches. It turns to a handsome butterfly, and in that state lives only three days, but makes the most of its brief span of existence, and seems brisk and happy. The body and head have a silvery appearance, the wings are black, and each wing has two triangular silver spots. There are many snakes in Malta, but no vipers or other venomous serpents. The Maltese believe that they are indebted to St. Paul for this exemption, and that their serpents have been deprived of their poison ever since his preservation from the viper which, we read, fastened on his hand.

Mary. And is that really true?

Mrs. M. It is really true that the serpents in Malta are not venomous. I have heard also that the experiment has been tried of importing venomous serpents from Sicily, and that they all died.

Richard. Pray, what is that little round island that I see in the map to the north-west of Malta?

Mrs. M. That is Goza. It is supposed to have been, at some former period, united to Malta, and to have been separated from it in some violent convulsion of the earth. A channel, between three and four miles wide, now divides the two islands, which are formed of the same sort of calcareous stone, and in all respects very much resemble each other, ex-

cepting that Goza, its surface being somewhat more level, is the more fertile of the two. Goza is almost entirely surrounded by inaccessible cliffs, and has only one or two places where a landing can be effected; it is about thirty miles in circumference, and contains several villages, and a small town with a castle in the centre of the island. Goza has always been considered as belonging to Malta, and has followed the same fortunes, and has had, like Malta, its natural securities increased by very strong fortifications. Two other smaller islands, or rather rocks, Comin and Cumino, lie in the channel between Goza and Malta. Comin is four or five miles in circuit, and has been supposed to be the Hephæstia, or Isle of Vulcan, of the ancients. Cumino is still smaller. Malta, with these her dependent islands, is said to contain ninety-three thousand inhabitants.



Arch across the main road to Valetta, and a part of the Aqueduct that supplies the city with water.

CONVERSATION II.

HISTORY OF THE ISLAND BEFORE IT BELONGED TO THE KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN.

Mrs. Markham. WHAT think you, Mary? Some suppose Malta to have been the island in which Homer placed the goddess Calypso, and in which he tells us that she detained so long the shipwrecked Ulysses.

Mary. Nay, Mamma, I am sure Homer could never have meant Malta, that ugly, bare place, with nothing but stone walls and no trees. Why, Calypso's island was the most beautiful place in the universe! Only let me repeat the description of it which I have learned by heart out of the *Odyssey*.

“Without the grot, a various sylvan scene
 Appear’d around, and groves of living green.
 Poplars and alders ever quivering play’d,
 And nodding cypress form’d a fragrant shade,
 On whose high branches, waving with the storm,
 The birds of broadest wing their mansions form,
 The chough, the sea-mew, the loquacious crow,
 And scream aloft, and skim the deeps below.
 Depending vines the shelving cavern screen
 With purple clusters blushing through the green.
 Four limpid fountains from the clefts distil,
 And every fountain pours a several rill,
 In many windings wandering down the hill,
 Where blooming meads with vivid greens are crown’d,
 And glowing violets throw odours round.”

Now, really, this is not the least like bare walls covered with white dust !

Mrs. M. All that I can say in vindication of the story is that there certainly is a grotto called the Grotto of Calypso, on the western side of the island ; and that though I can find no mention of the poplars and alders, it is yet spoken of as being a delightful and retired spot, enriched by a spring of clear and excellent water. Above the grotto, which is the work of nature, are several apartments cut out of the rock, with a staircase leading to them. This Grotto of Calypso was for some time inhabited by hermits, but at present it is untenanted, and suffered to fall into decay. Brydone and several other travellers have thought Goza to be Calypso’s Island. For my own part, I can give no opinion on the matter.

If we set Calypso aside, Malta was first peopled

by a colony of Phœnicians, who, discovering the commodiousness of its harbours, made it a resting place, and a place of refuge in their long often and stormy voyages. These navigators soon turned their thoughts towards the adornment of the barren rock, and we are told by Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian who flourished about forty years before Christ, that it became, while in their possession, rich and flourishing; that the houses were magnificent, and that the island abounded in skilful artificers, and was especially celebrated for a manufactory of linen, which was in great request for its unrivalled softness and whiteness. Malta was at this period governed by a king of its own, and was entitled Ogygia.

About seven hundred and thirty-six years before Christ, the Phœnicians were dispossessed by the Greeks, who established a colony in the island, and changed its name to Melitaion, or Melita, on account, it is said, of the abundance of honey produced in it, the word *Meli* being the Greek word which signifies honey. The Greeks retained possession about two hundred years, and the remains of what is said to have been a castle, and the ruins of several burial-places, are still shown as their work. The Carthaginians were the next masters of the island, and continued so till the year 242 before Christ, when they gave it up to the Romans. The splendour which Malta had acquired under the Phœnicians and Greeks had at

this time almost wholly passed away. Carthage, harassed by her long and anxious warfare with Rome, had neglected a spot comparatively so inconsiderable, and which, for the same reason, tempted but little the ambition of her rival. Under the dominion of the Romans the island again rose into consideration, and many temples were erected, which were much resorted to by persons who came to offer their vows to the gods, and to crave their protection from the hazards of the sea. No vestiges of any of these buildings now remain, but many coins and busts, and other relics of the Romans, have been found in the island.

On the division of the Roman territories into the empires of the east and the west, Melita fell to the share of Constantine. On the further dismemberment of the empire, it became alternately the prey of the Vandals and the Goths. In the year 552 it was wrested from these barbarians by Belisarius, and restored to the empire. During the three succeeding centuries its history is very obscure. Violent feuds prevailed amongst the inhabitants and the descendants of the ancient Greek colonists, who kept themselves quite a distinct people, and assumed a tyrannical superiority over the rest of the islanders. The oppressed islanders, unable of themselves to resist, called in, in the year 870, the assistance of the Arabs, or, as some writers call them, the Saracens. The Arab intruders were at first defeated and expelled, but after an interval

of thirty-four years, made another and more successful attack, and having exterminated the Greeks, took possession of all that belonged to them. The other inhabitants, who indeed were their own allies, they did not molest, but treated with justice and humanity, and to avoid the necessity of levying taxes on them to maintain their government, they fitted out cruizing vessels, and paid the public expenses of the island by the profits of their piracies.

George. That might be all very well for the people of Malta, but not so well for the rest of the world.

Mrs. M. The Saracens kept possession of the island about two hundred years, and in that time established themselves so thoroughly, that not the many changes that have since taken place, nor the lapse of years (nearly six hundred and fifty), have eradicated the traces of its African masters. The Maltese language, as I have already told you, has more of the Arabic in it than of any other. In the year 1090, Malta was seized on by Roger the Norman, son of Roger Guiscard, of whom you may probably recollect to have read.

Richard. O yes! I remember him very well in the history of France. He was a Norman adventurer who conquered Apulia, and also made himself master of Naples and Sicily, and went by the name of Roger the Robber.

Mrs. M. The Normans gave the Arabs the choice of leaving the island, and taking their pro-

perty with them, or of remaining in it and paying tribute. Some accordingly took their departure, while others stayed behind, and accepted this latter condition. These settled themselves after a time in a hill called *Kalva sa Baria*, a place so fortified by nature that it was inaccessible on every side except one; and even on that one side could only be approached by a narrow defile. Having secured themselves here, as they thought, they formed a plot to seize on the Norman chiefs, while attending divine service; but the plot being discovered, they were forced from their retreat, and finally banished from the island.

From this time there is no memorable event recorded till about the year 1191, when the island was transferred from the Norman to a German yoke, as a part of the portion of Constance, the descendant and heiress of the Guiscards, on her marriage with Henry VI., son of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Malta was now formed into a Marquisate, and became a mere military station for a period of seventy-two years, during which it remained subject to the emperors of Germany. In the year 1265, Malta was transferred, together with Sicily, to Charles of Anjou, and in 1282, to Pedro III. of Aragon his competitor. From the kings of Aragon it was afterwards delivered over to those of Castile, and by them was usually conferred on some younger branch of the royal family, or on some court favourite. During the whole of this

long period its commerce was almost annihilated, and the inhabitants plunged in poverty and wretchedness. More than once the island was mortgaged for money lent to the king. At length the Maltese, wearied by the unjust exactions they suffered, and disgusted and mortified at being made a subject of traffic to money-lenders, offered Alphonso of Castile to discharge the sum for which their island was pledged, on condition that the government of the two islands of Malta and Goza should be thenceforward united with that of Sicily. These conditions were accepted. This was in 1428. The islanders paid three hundred thousand florins to redeem themselves, and the internal regulation was committed to a council composed of nobles, and of the heads of the villages, or *casals*. Such was the state of these islands when the Emperor Charles V. succeeded to the dominions of his grandfather. This politic sovereign saw clearly their military importance, and that they might be made the bulwark of Europe against the then encroaching power of the Turks. The knights of St. John of Jerusalem, after having been driven in 1291 from Palestine, and in 1522 from their subsequent settlement at Rhodes, were now without a spot of ground which they could call their home. The emperor, therefore, to save himself the expense of fortifying Malta, and of keeping up the necessary garrison, thought it politic to assume the generosity of bestowing it on them, clogging the gift, however, with hard con-

ditions, and also with the stipulation that, if they should ever abandon the government of it, it should revert to the crown of Sicily. In 1530, accordingly, these gallant knights were invested with the sovereignty of Malta and Goza.

We must now go back to the year 1113, the date of the foundation of the order of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem.

CONVERSATION III.

**ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS
OF ST. JOHN PREVIOUSLY TO THEIR SETTLING AT
MALTA.****[A.D. 1113—1530.]**

Mrs. Markham. THIS order of knights (the only order of religious knighthood which still exists even nominally, after surviving the revolutions of above seven hundred years) arose from a very small beginning. Both before and during the crusades, the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were often maltreated by the infidels, and the health of many of them suffered severely from the fatigues and difficulties of their journey. In commiseration of the sufferings thus caused, some truly charitable people established a small hospital in the Holy City, and devoted themselves to the pious office of attending on the sick. The expenses of this hospital were defrayed by alms collected in Europe, until it was destroyed by the Turks. When the Turks were expelled by Godfrey, it was rebuilt. The numbers increased of those who devoted themselves to its service; and in 1113, Gerard, a native of Provence, formed them into a regular community. This Gerard is accordingly considered as the founder of this great order of St. John. This order was, at

first, solely religious. Its members were not styled knights, but were called the Hospitable Brothers of St. John the Baptist at Jerusalem. A society of nuns was also attached to the hospital, but as their history is altogether distinct from that of our knights, I need not give you any further account of it.

After a time, the pious brotherhood, finding their good works still incomplete, unless they could protect the pilgrims from being attacked or misused on their way, determined to unite the military with the ecclesiastical function. They added the title of Knights to that of brothers, and took the vow to defend the sepulchre of our Saviour, and to wage a perpetual war against all infidels in all parts of the world.

George. Then, after all, they were to be a sort of fighting monks !

Mrs. M. Exactly so, and also nurses of the sick, or *hospitallers*, into the bargain.

Mary. Did they wear the dress of soldiers or of monks ?

Mrs. M. Their dress was peculiar, and, as prescribed by Gerard, consisted of a long black gown or mantle, and on the left breast was a white linen cross of eight points, which we now call the Maltese cross. But when the knights acted in their military capacity, they wore the customary armour of their time. The rules of the order were extremely rigid, and every member engaged himself to maintain a

strict purity of life and manners. None were allowed to marry, and they were all required to pay the most implicit obedience to their chief, who had the title of Grand Master. The order was further divided into three distinct classes, each of which had its particular functions. The *Knights of Justice* composed the first class, the *Priests of Obedience* the second, and the *Serving Brothers* were the last and lowest. Into the first class, which included the grand master, and all those officers who bore any command, no one was admitted, unless he could prove the nobility of his ancestors for several generations. All of this class were knights or soldiers. The members of the second class, whose office it was to attend to and perform the service of the church, were not required to be of noble birth; but still it was necessary for them to be the descendants of freemen. A legitimate birth was the condition requisite for the last or lowest class, which was bound to serve both in the church and in the field, and also to attend the sick in the hospitals.

The order was again divided into eight other classes, or, as they were called, Languages; for as it was composed of people of different nations, it was deemed best for each nation to be distinct, and to have its own commander, its own dwelling place, and its own particular allotments of duty. These eight languages were the language of

Provence.

Auvergne.

France.

Italy.

Aragon.

Castile.

Germany.

England.

Mary. Are there any English knights of the order now?

Mrs. M. No. Henry VIII. dissolved the order in this country, and seized on its possessions. Upon this, the language of England was expunged from the order, and that of Bavaria substituted.

Mary. I suppose that only old people, that is to say, only quite grown up people, could belong to the order?

Mrs. M. At its first institution, doubtless none entered it except persons of mature age. There were instances afterwards of children being *destined* to the order even from their infancy, and of some being admitted into it in the capacity of pages at twelve years old. No one, however, could be an actual knight till he was twenty.

From a small beginning, the order soon became rich in numbers and in possessions. It is said to have had, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, not less than nineteen thousand manors in different parts of Europe. The Templars were said to have had nine thousand at the same time. During the crusades, the order of St. John bore a prominent part in the military history of the Holy Land.

When that struggle could no longer be maintained, and the Christians were driven out of Palestine, the Knights of St. John were of course obliged to abandon their hospitals, and the soil on which they had established them. In the year 1291, they took refuge in Cyprus, intending to wait there for a fit opportunity of regaining what they had lost. That opportunity, however, never came, and after lingering some years in vain expectation, and suffering many indignities from the king of the island, they determined to seek some permanent abiding place, and at last fixed on Rhodes. But Rhodes was to be won before it could be had. It belonged nominally to the Greek emperors, but was in reality the abode of a horde of Turks, who had established themselves there, and who carried on thence successful piracies against the Christians. During the residence of the knights in Cyprus, they had fitted out several galleys for the protection of pilgrims to the Holy Land in their passage by sea. In these galleys they now sailed to Rhodes, where they met with a stout resistance from the Greeks, as well as from the Turks. But after a contest which lasted four years, and winning the island inch by inch, they obtained possession of it in 1310. They now entitled themselves Knights of Rhodes, and fortified the island in all points. The grand master might be considered as a sovereign prince, having almost absolute authority over his own people, and being amenable to no prince or potentate save the pope alone.

George. Who appointed the grand master?

Mrs. M. He was chosen by a conclave of those knights who held the principal offices. The best account I can find for you of the election is in the following quotation from Mr. Brydone, who visited Malta about the year 1770. "The election of a new grand master must take place within three days after the death of the last grand master. During these three days there is scarcely a soul in Malta that sleeps. All is cabal and intrigue, and most of the knights are masked to prevent their particular attachments and connexions from being known. The moment the election is over, everything returns to its former channel." Vertot, in his History of the Knights, mentions an anecdote of Gozan, grand master in 1346, who nominated himself as the fittest person he knew for the office. The other electors, to whom it seems that his pretensions must have been no less evident than to himself, chose him accordingly. So at least the story goes. De Boisgilen, however, treats the whole relation as an absurdity, as he does also the story which you are so well acquainted with, of the same Gozan having destroyed a dragon that had long desolated the country, by means of two dogs that he had trained to the fight by accustoming them to tear to pieces a paste-board dragon filled with hasty pudding.

Mary. I think that any body has a right to call that an absurdity.

Mrs. M. And yet Thevenot, a French traveller, gravely tells us, that when he visited Malta he saw the effigy of the head, if not the actual head, of this very dragon on the gates of the city !

George. We have all heard of travellers' tales.

Richard. Pray, Mamma, how did the knights gain so much wealth ? I hope honestly ?

Mrs. M. I hope so too. They were enriched, like the other religious orders, by many and great bequests and donations ; and it was also one of their rules, that on the death of a member all his money went to the public treasury, with the exception of one-fifth, which he had the power left him of devising by will. The possessions of the Knights Hospitallers were also increased by the spoils of the Knights Templars, whose order was annulled by the pope.

Richard. Those Templars were much the same sort of knights as the Hospitallers ; were they not ?

Mrs. M. Each of these orders originated in the Holy Land ; and nearly at the same time, the year 1116 being the date assigned to the institution of the Templars. Both orders were at once religious and military. Yet they differed in some respects. The Templars had no hospital, and their habit was also different, being white with a red cross of four points on the breast ; while that of the Hospitallers was black with a white cross of eight points. The Templars were so called, because their first house or convent was situated near

the Temple of Jerusalem. Their society consisted at first of only nine knights, and they had lands given them for their maintenance by the patriarch of Jerusalem, and by Baldwin, king of Jerusalem. When they were driven from the Holy Land, instead of keeping together like the Hospitallers, they dispersed themselves over Europe. By their power, wealth, and insolence, they almost everywhere made themselves obnoxious to the ruling powers, who at last determined on, and brought about their destruction. But as I have given you full details on this subject elsewhere, I shall add no more here, except that a deadly hatred subsisted between the Hospitallers and the Templars, although brothers in arms, and bound to the same cause by their vows, and that this hatred more than once broke out in bloody feuds between them. But we must now return to our history.

The knights kept possession of Rhodes about two hundred years, and during all that time maintained an active and tolerably equal warfare against the Turks. To the Turks, after they became masters of Constantinople, in 1453, the possession of this island became a greater object than ever; and in 1480, the Sultan Mahomet II., whose career of conquest had now been almost uniformly successful for a period of more than thirty years, sent a vast army to attack the knights in this their stronghold. This army, strange to say, was put under the command of Michael Paleologus, a renegado of the

family of the Greek emperors of that name, who had been made grand vizier. The brave Peter d'Aubusson, then the grand master, defended his island with the greatest resolution, and the Turks, after being repulsed with great slaughter in a furious assault, were finally compelled to retire.

In 1520, Solyman the Magnificent succeeded to the throne of the Ottomans, and in 1521, Philip Villiers de l'Isle Adam was elected grand master of the order of St. John. The determination of the Turks to possess themselves of Rhodes, which indeed they had never, since the last siege, laid aside, was resumed in earnest in 1522, by the young sultan, then only twenty-two years of age. He had been furnished with plans of the island and its fortifications by a treacherous Jew, a physician at Rhodes. But these would have been of little use, had he not also had another friend in the island. This was a Spanish knight, named Andrea d'Amarald, chancellor of the order, who, to revenge the disappointment which he had suffered in not being himself chosen grand master at the time when Philip de l'Isle Adam was elected, was ready to betray the brotherhood into the hands of their enemies.

George. I cannot think how any body can bear to be treacherous; for all people hate a traitor, even those who make use of him!

Mrs. M. D'Amarald sent a letter to Constantinople, informing the sultan of the exact state of

Rhodes, of the numbers of the garrison, and the quantity of arms and provisions, and adding, that one of the bastions was about to be taken down and rebuilt. He finally advised that this opportunity of making an attack should not be lost. This advice the sultan was not slow to adopt, and in the latter end of May, in the year, as I have already told you, 1522, a Turkish army of a hundred and forty thousand fighting men, and sixty thousand pioneers, under the command of a pasha called Pyrrhus of Peri, landed in Rhodes.

Mary. Were the knights taken by surprise, or did they know of their coming?

Mrs. M. The mighty preparations for so great an armament could not be carried on without being known; nor, indeed, did the sultan attempt to make any secret of them, but sent letters of defiance to the grand master while they were going on. L'Isle Adam, on his part, did all that forecast could do. He summoned home all the absent knights. He strengthened the fortifications of the town, and provided it with everything necessary for a long siege. He also stripped the country round of all the forage and other resources which it might else furnish to the invaders. In all these precautions he was perpetually opposed by the deceitful D'Amarald, who gave such plausible reasons for his opposition, that his treachery was not suspected. He could not, however, persuade the grand master to act against his own better judg-

ment, or to intermit the greatest and most skilful exertions for the general safety. On making a muster of his forces, L'Isle Adam found that they amounted to five thousand five hundred fighting men, of whom five hundred were knights, and the rest common soldiers. To these were added a considerable number of the peasants of the island, whom he caused to be trained to arms. The citizens also enrolled themselves as combatants : but still all these supplies were inadequate, and he therefore sent pressing letters to all the Christian states of Europe, calling for aid.

Mary. And I dare say they were all in a hurry to come to his help ?

Mrs. M. I am sorry to say that most of them turned a deaf ear to his appeal. France and England alone sent some small force to his relief; but the vessels which conveyed it were either dispersed or lost at sea. The only real assistance which he received was from the senate of the little town of Brescia in Italy, which sent him one man.

Mary. Only one man, Mamma ! That could be no assistance at all !

Mrs. M. It proved, nevertheless, of the greatest : for that one man was Gabriel Martinengo, the most celebrated engineer then living, and in skill, bravery, and resource, a host in himself. On his arrival in Rhodes, he immediately set about a survey of the place. He strengthened all the more vulnerable parts of the walls, and threw a double

chain across the entrance of the harbour, and in short put every thing in a complete state of defence. And thus, when the Turks arrived, they found the Rhodians ready at all points to resist them.

The Turkish army having landed, the siege began. At first the besiegers had no success, their missiles having but little effect in the attack of lofty and impregnable walls. On the other hand, the besieged caused incredible havock among the Turks, who were crowded together, and exposed to a perpetual shower of fire-balls, stones, and arrows. It was in vain that they dug trenches, and raised batteries. The Rhodians from their high towers looked down on all their works, and destroyed them as fast as they were completed; and before the siege had lasted many weeks, a mutiny arose in the Turkish camp, and the soldiers complained that they had been brought to Rhodes only to be slaughtered.

The sultan, being informed of this disturbance, came himself to quell it by his presence. On his arrival, the siege, which had before somewhat flagged, was renewed with fresh vigour; and it required all the wisdom and valour of L'Isle Adam to repel the open assault without, and to counteract the machinations of the secret enemy within. That there was a secret enemy within he was convinced, by finding that the Turks invariably made their attack on that part of the walls which was the least defended, a coincidence which could not always be

accidental. Having his suspicions thus awakened, he was not long in discovering one of the traitors. The Jewish doctor was detected in the very act of discharging an arrow with a letter attached to it into the enemy's camp, and was immediately hanged; and the grand master, ignorant that a still more dangerous traitor yet remained, believed that the communication with the enemy was now at an end. The abominable D'Amarald, however, still contrived to keep up an intercourse with Solyman, and gave him information that the gunpowder of the garrison was nearly expended. At the same time he endeavoured to deceive L'Isle Adam by the assurance that there was enough in the magazine to last a twelvemonth. It was his province, as chancellor, to keep charge of the ammunition, and to overlook the distribution of it to the garrison. Fortunately, the grand master, to guard against all hazards, had, previously to the commencement of the siege, secured within the city a large quantity of saltpetre, together with the other materials for making gunpowder; and as soon as he perceived that the store in the magazine began to run short, he set his people to make more.

George. O that excellent L'Isle Adam! He deserved to save his city, and I hope he did.

Mrs. M. In the meantime, the Sultan, finding his batteries of no effect, had been employing the pioneers to undermine the walls. They accordingly

opened mines underneath the bastions; but nothing could escape the knowledge of our vigilant Marti-nengo, who made counter-trains, and blew up and destroyed the pioneers in their underground pas-sages. Still, however, Solyman persevered, and at last two of the mines took effect, and a piece of the wall, about thirty-six feet in length, in the part called the bastion of England, because it was under the particular charge of the English knights, was thrown down by the explosion, and filled the deep and wide ditch with its rubbish, forming a bridge for the enemies to pass over. Instantly the Turks mounted the breach, but were driven back by the desperate valour of the knights. Some time after-wards they made another attempt on the same bastion, and at last succeeded in planting the stan-dard of Mahomet on its top. It was not, however, suffered to remain there long: it was torn down, and the Turks were repulsed, with the slaughter, on this occasion, of 3000 men.

The Sultan, exasperated to see his fine army thus wasting away in vain attempts to conquer a mere handful of men, next determined to assault the town in several places at once, hoping thus to distract the attention of the garrison. At the same time he caused a throne to be erected on an eminence, from which he might witness, as he hoped, the suc-cess of this assault. But he witnessed nothing except the defeat of his own troops. The besieged, rendered desperate by the imminency of the danger,

defended their walls with unexampled bravery. Every one helped, according to his strength or ability: even the women and children did what they could. The assault lasted many hours; but the Turks were at last driven back, their general slain, and the men disheartened and in confusion. Solyman descended from his elevated seat, and returned to his camp burning with shame and rage, and was on the point of giving up the enterprise, when a secret intimation from the traitor D'Amarald (as was supposed) of the distressed state of the garrison encouraged him to persevere.

In fact, the Rhodians were now reduced to the most miserable condition; the greater part of the knights were killed; and of those who yet survived, many were disabled by wounds, and the rest worn out by fatigue; and to add to their misfortunes, Martinengo was among the disabled, having received a severe hurt in the eye. It now seemed impossible to hold out against another attack; but, in this emergency, the garrison received a most seasonable relief in the arrival of one of the knights, the grand prior of Navarre, with a reinforcement of soldiers. About the same time, also, the grand master had the good fortune to discover the treachery of D'Amarald. The traitor was executed, and thus all intelligence with the enemy was at last cut off. It was now November, and the siege had lasted ever since the end of May. On November 30, Solyman made a last and again a fruitless

attack ; and then, wearied by his long and unavailing endeavours to reduce the city, and believing himself to be the scoff of the world for his failure, offered the grand master terms of capitulation. L'Isle Adam was at first unwilling to accept them, being determined to defend his post to the last extremity. But he was obliged, though reluctantly, to yield to the entreaties of the citizens ; who, wearied with the siege, and reduced to great misery, were glad to obtain peace on any condition, even the condition of becoming subject to the Turks. The grand master, however, protracted the negotiation as much as he could, in the hope of succour arriving from the European powers ; who, he vainly believed, would never suffer an order to be sacrificed which had been for four centuries the bulwark of Christendom, or their island to become the prey of the infidels. But he hoped in vain : he was left to struggle alone with his fate ; the princes of Europe saw his downfall with indifference ; and he was at last compelled to lower the standard of the cross before that of the crescent.

Richard. What were all the kings of Europe about, that they could not rouse themselves in such a glorious cause ?

Mrs. M. The kings of Europe are like private persons, and have always so very many affairs of their own, that they are seldom either able or willing to assist a distressed neighbour. Besides, to say the truth, our friends the Knights of St. John, brave

and noble as they were, and notwithstanding the services which they had rendered to the Christian states, were no great favourites with any of them. One cause of this was the vow by which they held themselves obliged to fight *only* against infidels, and which consequently rendered them of no account in the *neighbourly* wars, if I may so express myself, amongst the Christian powers. Another cause was the riches of the order, which made it an object of jealousy; and to this may be added the haughtiness of the knights themselves, who valuing themselves on their high birth, their valiant deeds, and the great reputation of their order, are accused of carrying themselves with a degree of pride, which made them objects of dislike individually, as well as collectively.

The Sultan, believing, like L'Isle Adam, that succour would speedily arrive to the knights from Europe, was as desirous to hasten the capitulation as the grand master was to delay it, and he thought himself fortunate in its being all settled definitively, just as a numerous fleet appeared in sight. He soon discovered that this was a fleet of his own, bringing him reinforcements; and he is said, on learning this, to have regretted his precipitation. He, however, abided honourably by the terms he had made. These terms were, on the whole, very favourable to the besieged. The knights were required to give up the town, and to depart from the island; but were allowed twelve

days to prepare for their departure, and to take with them all their valuable effects, their artillery, and also their galleys. Those of the citizens who chose to accompany them were also permitted to do so.

During this period of twelve days, mutual visits and civilities passed between the Sultan and the grand master. Solyman seemed to be greatly moved by the venerable and noble appearance of the brave warrior who had capitulated to him, and through his interpreter expressed his esteem and admiration ; adding, “that it was not without reluctance that he obliged so brave a Christian to abandon his home.”

Thus were the Knights of St. John once more wanderers on the face of the earth. Their first resting place was in Candia, where they remained a short time to recover from their wounds, and from their late fatigues. This repose was but necessary ; for when they quitted Rhodes, they were in such a worn-out and sad condition as excited the commiseration of all who saw them. From Candia this little band of heroes went to Messina, to which place they were also accompanied by about 4000 Rhodians, who had desired to follow their fortunes ; but a pestilence which broke out in their camp obliged them again to remove. They accordingly removed to Civita Vecchia, but this could not be a permanent resting place for them ; and L'Isle Adam had many conferences with the Pope on the

subject of their future settlement, and at last the Island of Malta was determined on.

Mary. And now, then, I hope these poor people were soon comfortably settled again in a home of their own ?

Mrs. M. Not so soon, nor so comfortably as you may imagine. Charles V., when he offered them the island, wanted to make it one of the conditions that the knights should acknowledge him as their sovereign, a condition to which they could not agree consistently with their vows, which forbade them to acknowledge any other sovereign than the Pope. Charles also insisted on attaching the town of Tripoli, in Africa, to the cession of Malta, an addition that almost annulled the benefit of the gift.

Mary. How was that, Mamma ? The knights wanted a place to live in ; and there was a town ready for them ?

Mrs. M. But it was a town the possession of which could do them little good. It was situate on a barren sandy desert, begirt with enemies, and half in ruins, without resources from without, or defences within. The emperor had lately won it from the Turks, and neither liked to let it fall back again into their hands, nor to be at the expense of keeping it himself ; and he was therefore very willing to saddle the knights with all the trouble and hazard attending its preservation. Altogether there was nothing so very tempting in the emperor's offer as to make the grand master in any hurry to

close with it. Moreover, he nourished a secret hope of regaining his beautiful island of Rhodes, which some Turkish rebels offered to assist him to recover from Solyma, and where the remaining inhabitants would have been very glad to throw off the yoke of the infidels, and to restore the knights. But all these attempts came to nothing. After ten tedious years of protracted negociation, the islands of Malta, Goza, and their dependencies, were ceded in full sovereignty to the knights, who from henceforward were styled Knights of Malta. The knights consented to burden themselves with Tripoli, and the emperor waived his claim of fealty. He also, in consideration of the barrenness of the islands, agreed that the knights should receive annually a certain supply of corn from the viceroy of Sicily. The definitive treaty between the parties was signed March 25, 1530, but there still remained so many difficulties to be got over, that it was not till the 26th of October following, that the knights were put in actual possession of their desolate rock. To them it must have appeared the more desolate from its contrast with the island they had lost, the soil of which is so fruitful that the ancients fabled it to be enriched by golden showers, and the country diversified, and beautiful, rich in fine springs, and abounding with trees. In short nature has been no less lavish of her bounties to Rhodes than she has been parsimonious to Malta.

Richard. Are there any vestiges of the knights still left at Rhodes?

Mrs. M. The present town of Rhodes, the capital of the island, which stands at some distance from the ancient city, was, I believe, built by them. It is surrounded by a triple wall, originally of great strength, but now decayed and ruinous, although the Turks still trust solely to it for the protection of the city, and do not take the trouble to man it, or mount it with cannon. On some of the towers and bastions are inscriptions and coats of arms, and amongst them may be discerned the arms of England and France. A tower which defends the mouth of the harbour is still called the tower of St. John. The streets are much wider and straighter than those of the generality of Turkish towns, and the houses exhibit something of the Italian style of architecture. The cells of the knights still exist, as also the crosses and coats of arms by which they were distinguished. The palace also of the grand master, and the church of St. John, still remain. The latter is now used as a mosque. The harbour, so noted in ancient times, is almost choked up from neglect, and now only admits of small vessels, and boats.

Mary. Was there not once a famous statue that stood across the harbour?

Mrs. M. Two stones, one on each side of the entrance, are still shown as the pedestals on which the feet of the statue which was called, as you know, the Colossus, are said to have stood. The story of this statue is that it was of bronze, and one

hundred and fifty feet high, that it was the work of Chares, a disciple of Lysippus, and that he was employed twelve years in the making of it. The statue was hollow, and the inside was filled with stones to give it weight and steadiness. But whether there was too much weight, or it was not properly balanced, the story goes on to say, that when it had stood about fifty-eight years it fell. Even in its fallen state, it continued to be regarded as one of the wonders of the world. The Saracens conquered Rhodes in the year 665, and are reported to have found the Colossus lying prostrate, but still entire, and with a true barbarian spirit, to have broken it to pieces for the sake of the metal; and we are assured that nine hundred camels were laden with the fragments.

CONVERSATION IV.

HISTORY OF THE KNIGHTS FROM THE TIME OF
THEIR SETTLEMENT IN MALTA TO THE DEATH OF
THE GRAND MASTER LA VALETTE.

[Years after Christ, 1530—1568.]

Mary. We left off yesterday just as the knights were going to take possession of their new island. Pray tell us how they went on there.

Mrs. M. Not very comfortably, I am afraid; at least not for some time, for the island had been left in such a state of neglect, that the knights found everything in ruins. At first they took up their abode in some poor fishermen's huts in Il Burgo, on the east side of the great harbour. L'Isle Adam's first care was to put the castle of St. Angelo, one of the chief defences, and which he found quite untenable, into repair. His next business was to surround the town of Il Burgo with a wall, as a protection against the inroads of the Turkish cruisers, who were continually landing in the island, and carrying off the inhabitants as slaves.

George. I hope, then, that the good old man at last got settled, and tolerably happy, in his new dominions.

Mrs. M. As to being either settled or happy, I fear that that was not to be the lot of L'Isle Adam, any more than of many other pilgrims on this earth. In the first place, his heart was always set upon regaining his dear island of flowers and fertility, and he regarded Malta as only a temporary abode. And as to happiness, he was not only kept in continual anxiety by the Turks, but was also harassed by the insubordination of his own people, who, probably, during their ten years wandering, had somewhat relaxed in discipline. Not long after their arrival in Malta a private quarrel took place between two knights, which afterwards spread through the whole brotherhood, and at last produced a violent fray. It was in vain for a long time that the grand master interposed his authority to put a stop to the uproar. And when at last it was quelled, the painful duty which devolved on him of punishing the offenders inflicted a dreadful wound on his feelings. It was required by the rules of the order that the culprits should be thrown alive into the sea. Several knights suffered this penalty: Others, who were less guilty, were merely degraded. This tragedy caused L'Isle Adam extreme grief, and while he was still suffering from it, the intelligence was brought to him that the king of England, Henry VIII., had suppressed the order of the Knights Hospitallers, and had seized on all their possessions within his realm. This news so much affected the poor old man, as

to throw him into a fever, which put an end to his life, August 21, 1534. His loss was like the loss of a father to all his people ; and the sentence which they inscribed on his tomb does him but justice : *Hic jacet Virtus victrix Fortunæ*. The translation, Mary, of these Latin words is as follows : “ Here lies Virtue, victorious over Fortune.”

Mary. And pray, mamma, what became of the English knights ? Did they cease to be knights ?

Mrs. M. They still continued to belong to the order, but, having thus lost all their possessions, they were maintained during the rest of their lives by the brotherhood. For a short time, indeed, during Queen Mary's reign, their lands were restored, but they lost them again when Elizabeth came to the throne. On this the language of England was erased from the order, and that of Bavaria, as I have already told you, substituted for it.

In the year which followed the death of L'Isle Adam, the knights rendered good service to the emperor Charles V., in his expedition to Tunis, and especially in the siege of the fortress of Goletta, where they leaped into the sea, sword in hand, and waded through the water to gain the shore, which it was too shallow for boats to approach. After a desperate contest they planted the great standard of the order at the top of the breach, and the emperor acknowledged that it was chiefly owing to their valour that the place was taken. This event

took place in the grandmastership of Peter de Ponte, L'Isle Adam's successor, who died in November, 1535. The next successor to the office did not survive even so long as a year, and in 1536, John d'Omides, or De Homides, a Spaniard, was appointed, a man much more intent on enriching himself, and currying favour with Charles V., his natural sovereign, than on promoting the honour and prosperity of his knights. Four hundred of the knights engaged in the emperor's unfortunate expedition to Algiers in the year 1548, and showed on this occasion also the same heroic intrepidity which the order had manifested thirteen years before at the siege of Tunis. But in this perilous service they suffered severely, and lost the greater part of their number, and some of their best and bravest commanders.

In 1551, Dragut, a famous Turkish pirate, effected a landing in the island, and laid siege to Citta Vecchia, which being defended only by the inhabitants, and ill provided with stores, was unable to make any long resistance. De Homides, who was snugly intrenched within his own walls at Il Burgo, would not afford any succour to the besieged. At last Villegagnon, a brave French knight, with six others, getting out of all patience with the supineness of the grand master, went to assist the besieged. They with some difficulty escaped being intercepted by the Turkish troops surrounding the city, and were drawn up by ropes

into the town. But although they did all that seven brave men could do, the town must inevitably have fallen, but for a well-contrived and well-executed stratagem. A knight (not one of these seven) wrote a letter, purporting to be from Messina, informing the grand master that Doria, the famous Genoese admiral, who now commanded the Spanish fleet, was coming with an overwhelming force to give battle to the Turks, and that he sent him this notice that he and Doria might act in concert. It was contrived that the boat conveying this letter should fall into the hands of the Turks. The Turkish admiral on reading it was so much alarmed at its contents, that he immediately embarked his men, and sailed away in all haste, only stopping by the way at Goza to indulge his people in their love of plunder, a taste in which they seem on this occasion to have indulged themselves to the utmost, as it is said that they carried off above six thousand of the inhabitants as slaves. After this exploit they made the best of their way to Tripoli, which De Homides, either through avarice or neglect, had suffered to be in want of almost every requisite to stand a siege. In vain had the governor transmitted representations to him of the necessities of his garrison. No succours were sent to him, and after the town had held out as long as in its indefensible state it was possible to do, it surrendered.

Mary. Well ! that loss was a gain.

Mrs. M. In reality so it was ; but the knights regarded its loss as a loss of honour, and were exceedingly exasperated against the grand master for his misconduct. He, to avert the blame from himself, threw it on the governor, accusing him of having been tampered with by the French king, Francis I., to surrender Tripoli to the infidels.

Richard. What good could it possibly do to the king of France for the Turks to get that desolate place ?

Mrs. M. Francis had made an alliance with the Turks against their mutual enemy Charles V. The charge of treason, however, as it regarded the governor of Tripoli, was totally unfounded. Nevertheless, the grand master threw him into prison, and invited all persons who were disposed to say anything against him, to give their evidence, and on the other hand, forbade every one to speak a word in his favour. This prohibition could not, however, withhold Villegagnon from advocating his cause ; and his innocence was, in spite of the machinations of the grand master, made clear. But still De Homides, although he could not take his life, degraded him from the order, and detained him in prison, together with three other knights whom he had implicated in the loss of Tripoli. Though these unjust proceedings necessarily disgusted every good and honourable man, many of the Spanish knights took the part of De Homides, because he was their countryman, and the order was torn by

factions during the rest of his grandmastership. In 1553 he died, and it was found on his death that he had enriched his own family at the expense of the public treasury. This discovery so much exasperated the knights, that they thought of refusing to bury him with the usual honours. But the consideration that it might bring discredit on the order to show so marked a disrespect to the memory of a grand master, induced them finally to allow of the performance of the customary ceremonies, which in truth in this instance were mere ceremonies, as no one felt, or attempted to express, any regret.

The successor of De Homides was Claudius de la Sangle, a Frenchman, whose reign, for so it might be termed, was chiefly marked by a most extraordinary hurricane, on the 23rd of September, 1554. The wind rose suddenly, or rather two contrary winds met, and raised a sudden tempest, which overwhelmed all the vessels in the harbour, driving them against each other, and shattering them to pieces, while the waves rose mountains high. Four of the galleys were actually turned keel uppermost with their crews on board. The houses near the port were blown down, and even the castle of St. Angelo was shaken on its strong foundations. The tempest subsided, however, as suddenly as it had risen, and in half an hour was succeeded by a perfect calm. The bodies were found of six hundred persons who perished. The next day the grand master had

some of the planks of the overturned galleys removed, to see if anything living remained under them. In one of these was found alive a knight named Romegas, who, with a few others, had been all night up to their throats in water, and had only kept themselves from perishing by clinging to the boards which had been the bottom, but which were now, in their inverted state, the uppermost part of the hold of the vessel, which had providentially retained just air enough to allow them to breathe.

Mary. O, Mamma, how exactly the same things happen over and over again! That is just the same sort of story that Richard read to me the other day out of the newspaper.

Mrs. M. Come then, Richard, you shall tell us your story before I go on with mine.

Richard. Mine is quite as remarkable a one, I think, as yours, Mamma. An English ship, on its voyage to Gottenburg, fell in, off the Dodder Bank, with a large Finland vessel, laden with timber, for London, bottom upwards, and with a man visible on it, who had just made his way out through the bottom. It appears that the vessel had upset in a gale, and that of the crew, which had consisted of eleven men, seven were drowned, and that the remaining four were driven into the hold through a small hatchway in the floor of the cabin. Here, without food and in darkness, they remained four days and four nights. Most providentially they found in the hold a spike nail and a stone, which had been part

of the ballast. With the stone they sharpened the nail, and then set to work to make a hole through the planking and timbers which were over their heads. The timbers were fourteen inches thick, and the planking three inches and a half. As soon as they had made an opening, they fastened a slip torn from one of their shirts to a stick, and hoisted it as a signal of distress. They still went on, however, enlarging the opening, till they were able to creep through one by one; and they had not all done this when the English ship came up and rescued them *.

Mary. Well, Richard, that's just the story you read to me. But I don't understand how these ships came to swim when they were upset. I thought that if a ship upset, or capsized, as I think George sometimes calls it, it would sink directly.

Mrs. M. If any air is left in the hollow of the bottom, that may still keep it up, even though laden with heavy stores or merchandise. It is only the weight of the lading, or stores, or ballast, which causes a ship to sink when upset. This Finland vessel, too, it seems, was laden with timber, and the Maltese galleys had probably but little ballast. I now return to my history.

In 1557, La Sangle was succeeded by John de la Valette, of the language of Provence, a man of the most renowned prudence and bravery. Valette's first act was an act of mercy and justice, in

* Morning Herald Newspaper, for November 1, 1833.

restoring to liberty and to his rank in the order the persecuted governor of Tripoli, who still languished in prison. His next cares were to put his fortifications in thorough repair, and to strengthen his power by sea. A continual naval warfare had been kept up against the infidels ever since the knights had left Rhodes, and was now waged with additional vigour under this grandmastership. One action, which took place in 1564, is, in its consequences, much too memorable to be passed over. A squadron of Maltese galleys encountered in the strait between Zante and Cephalonia a very large Turkish galleon, laden with valuable merchandise, and armed, like a vessel of war, with twenty large brass cannon, and above forty others of a smaller size, and which had on board two hundred Janissaries. After a battle of five hours, this galleon was taken, to the extreme consternation of the Sultanas and other ladies of the seraglio, who, it seems, though shut out from all personal intercourse with the world, were yet allowed to engage in traffic, and had a principal share in the rich cargo of the vessel. Solyman himself also regarded the capture as a personal affront, and indeed the affair was taken up with so much warmth at Constantinople, that the very muftis preached about it in the mosques, calling upon the Sultan, in the name of Mahomet, to avenge the cause of the prophet upon these audacious Christians. Solyman did not require much exhortation; he vowed the entire

extirpation of the Order of St. John, and to put his vow in force made preparations for a mighty armament.

Richard. Could this be the same Solyman who had so many years before taken Rhodes?

Mrs. M. The same; Solyman II., surnamed the Magnificent. He was twenty-two years old at the time of the siege of Rhodes, and consequently was at this time about sixty-four. His reign was one of the most splendid of all the reigns of the Sultans of Constantinople. Among his other exploits he overran Hungary, and laid siege to Vienna, but was obliged to retreat with great loss, after making no less than twenty unsuccessful assaults.

George. The history of the siege of Vienna would be as entertaining as that of Rhodes. I wish you would give us some account of it.

Mrs. M. It would lead us too far from our present subject. Have a little patience, however, and I promise you as entertaining a siege as you can desire. Solyman assembled all his bravest officers, and all the most daring pirates he could collect, and amongst them Dragut, whom he made admiral of the fleet. But there being at this time no traitors amongst the knights, the Sultan was obliged, before his armament could be dispatched, to send Turkish spies, disguised as fishermen, to examine the shores of Malta, and bring him the best information they could, as to the state of the island. The destination of the expedition he at the same time endeavoured to keep secret, but still

La Valette had a strong suspicion that it was to be against Malta, and made preparations for defence accordingly. Pope Pius IV. sent the grand master ten thousand crowns, and Philip II., who had succeeded his father Charles V., as King of Spain, promised him a reinforcement of twenty thousand men to be sent from Sicily under the command of Don Garcia the viceroy.

Mary. So! I am glad to see that the people of Europe were ashamed of their conduct at the other siege, and are now going to help these poor dear knights in reality.

Mrs. M. I am afraid it was the instinct of self-preservation, rather than any other more exalted motive, which at this time actuated the powers of Europe. Solyman's power had been felt in the very heart of Germany, and neither the Pope nor the King of Spain were desirous of seeing his flag wave so near to their own territories as at Malta. The Turkish fleet appeared off the island, May 18, 1565. It consisted of one hundred and fifty-nine vessels of war, and had on board thirty thousand fighting men, besides the slaves at the oar. There were also an infinite number of smaller vessels, laden with artillery, ammunition, provisions, and all things necessary for a siege. The whole was under the command of Mustapha Pasha, an experienced officer, and as celebrated for his cruelty as for his skill. The fleet anchored in the bay of Mungiaro, and the landing of the men, which was at first successfully as well as bravely

resisted, was effected afterwards under cover of the night. If you have not forgotten what I before said of the harbour of Valetta, you will recollect that it is divided into two parts by a peninsula, or long tongue of land, on the end of which stands the fort or castle of St. Elmo, which thus protects the entrance into both havens.

Richard. Yes, Mamma, I remember that the harbour to the west is called the Marsa Muschetta, and has the island of the lazaretto in the middle of it ; and that the harbour to the east is the larger of the two, and is called the grand port. So you see I do not forget what you tell us.

Mrs. M. I am glad to see that you do not ; and you should also remember, that from the east or south-east side of the great port, jut out also two other small peninsulas, forming lesser and inner havens. On the extreme point of that nearest the sea is the castle of St. Angelo, and on the other is fort St. Michael ; and in the recess of the haven formed by these two peninsulas, stands Il Burgo, now called Citta Vittoriosa. The two peninsulas, together with Il Borgo, are united and surrounded by fortifications, and here lay the chief strength of the place at the time we are speaking of. The fort of St. Elmo, which had usually been intrusted to a small garrison of only sixty men, was then quite detached, but was strengthened for the impending emergency by a reinforcement of sixty knights, and a company of Spanish infantry.

On reviewing all his forces, the grand master found that he could command seven hundred knights, and eight thousand five hundred soldiers, including those of the Maltese peasants who had been trained to arms. At the end of this review, he and the knights proceeded to church, where they received the sacrament, and made a renewal of their vows to fight in behalf of the Christian cause to the last drop of their blood. When this solemn ceremony was concluded, La Valette ordered each knight to his particular duty. You have already been told that each language was specially intrusted with the charge of its own particular part of the fortifications.

Mustapha, having landed his troops, lost no time in proceeding to action. His first step was to attack the little fort of St. Elmo, which he imagined would not occupy him more than a day or two. But he only judged from its external appearance, and did not take into account the stout hearts that were within. Instead of two days, the siege of this fort lasted from the 24th of May till the 22nd, or, according to some, the 23rd of June. It would be almost impossible for me to detail all that took place during those four weeks. The contrivances and efforts of the Turks, on the one hand, to overcome the garrison; and, on the other hand, the resistance, and almost more than mortal bravery of the garrison, form a history unparalleled in the annals of war.

Amongst other anecdotes it is recorded of the Cavalier di Guardampe, that, having received a musket ball through his body, he refused the assistance of those who offered to carry him to some place where he might have his wounds dressed, telling them that they must look on him as a dead man, and go to the assistance of the living. Saying this, he crawled to the chapel, and laying himself at the foot of the altar, there expired. The bailiff of Negropont, and the cavalier Di Broglio, two very aged knights, were removed, after being severely wounded, to Il Burgo, and the grand master proposed to them to retire into the convent till their wounds were healed, but this they refused to do, being still anxious to render to the common cause all the assistance they could. "It was a sight worth admiration," says their historian, "to see men of the first rank, grey with age and service, wounded and maimed, some with crutches, others with their arms slung in scarfs, assisting in the lowest offices of the siege, carrying stones, earth, planks, powder, balls, and other useful materials, and crawling even upon the ramparts and breaches, to show their contempt of danger. During the earlier part of the siege, the garrison sent their wounded by night across the harbour in boats, to the hospital at Il Burgo, and brought back reinforcements of fresh men in their place. But the Turks, observing this, extended their batteries, till they left the besieged no way of communication with

their friends, except by means of expert divers, who could swim across the harbour unseen. All this time the promised aid from Sicily came not, and the grand master was the more anxious to preserve St. Elmo, because the viceroy had declared that if that fortress should fall into the hands of the Turks, he should withhold his succour altogether.

Richard. That was anything but being a friend in need, I think !

Mary. And did he really withhold it, Mamma ?

Mrs. M. The Sicilian fleet was all ready to sail from Messina, and had on board several members of the order, who were taking this opportunity of returning to Malta ; and both they and the other soldiers engaged in the service were impatient in the last degree to face the infidels. Notwithstanding this, however, and notwithstanding the repeated and earnest messages he received from the grand master to hasten his coming, Don Garcia formed various pretences to prolong his delay. At last he despatched four galleys, with directions not to enter the port, but only to keep within sight of the island, till such time as St. Elmo should have fallen, and then to return to Sicily.

Mary. How shameful it was to tantalize the poor people at Malta by pretending to come to their help, and yet not to do anything really for them !

Mrs. M. And what a cruel situation it was for those knights who were on board the galleys, and who were all ardour to assist their friends, and yet were prevented !

George. If I had been one of them, I am sure I should have mutinied.

Mrs. M. Some of them found means of getting on shore, before the time when the galleys, which, as they had been instructed, showed themselves before Malta, sailed back to Messina.

Among the defences used by the worn-out garrison of St. Elmo were some most horrible instruments of destruction, called fire-hoops, which were hoops of wood of a very large circumference, and which were first soaked in spirits of wine, and well rubbed with grease. Hemp and flax were then wound round them, and lastly they were smeared with pitch and tar, and set on fire, and then thrown down on the assailants where they appeared most crowded together. These fire-hoops generally enclosed two or three persons at once, who were burned to death before they could be extricated. And this invention, so new and horrible, caused an indescribable confusion and panic among the Turks. Dragut, the pirate, had now arrived to aid the besiegers, and a point of land opposite to St. Elmo, where he erected a battery, is still called, after him, Point Dragut. As he and the Pasha were standing with an engineer on an exposed place, taking a survey of the fort, and devising new methods of attack, a shot killed the engineer, and wounded Dragut, who was carried to his tent in a dying condition.

Mary. I hope, Mamma, there is no harm in being glad, when a Turk, and a pirate too, gets killed?

Mrs. M. I am afraid it will not do to analyze our feelings in such matters too closely: we ought to be sorry for the sufferings of every fellow-creature, but our sympathies may allowably be stronger for some than for others. You may now, however, call forth all your sympathies for your friends in St. Elmo, whose hour is near at hand. Mustapha, exasperated at having been detained so long before so insignificant a place, and by such a handful of men, and at having lost above eight thousand of his best soldiers, resolved to take it by a general assault. The day fixed on was the 23rd of June. The attack began at sunrise, and the assailants were received with such determined courage by the garrison, now reduced to about sixty persons, that after four hours of the most strenuous and incessant exertion, they relaxed as if to take breath. The garrison availed themselves of this respite to have their wounds bound up, being resolved to hold out to the last moment. And so, indeed, they did, and the assault, which was recommenced at eleven o'clock, only ended when the last of these heroes was killed. Then, and not till then, the triumphant Pasha marched through the breach which he had made into the fort, over the dead bodies of the knights who had defended it. When he saw how small the place was, and how inconsiderable the number of those brave men by whom he had been so long resisted, he could not forbear exclaiming, "What must the father cost us," (mean-

ing, of course, the castle of St. Angelo,) “seeing this little son of his has destroyed us so many thousand lives!” Like a true barbarian, however, instead of being struck with admiration of the valour and perseverance of his brave opponents, he was filled with savage resentment and rage. Finding none living on whom to vent his fury, he wreaked it, as far as he was now able, on the dead. He commanded a search to be made for the bodies of the knights, and, causing their hearts to be torn out, fired them out of the mouth of his cannon into the castle of St. Angelo.

Mary. O, Mamma, what a shocking thought! I think the hearts of the living knights must have been almost broken.

Mrs. M. And yet they could hardly suffer more than they had suffered already; for they had seen the whole assault from their own towers, and you may imagine what they must have felt at seeing, without having the power to help, their brave companions in arms struggling with their too-powerful enemies. La Valette shed tears over the dead bodies of his friends, which the tide floated to the foot of the castle walls. The Turks had tied some of the bodies on planks, and thrown them into the sea, after having cut the sign of the cross on them as a mark of contempt. La Valette, in requital of these barbarities, caused the heads of all his prisoners to be cut off, and fired into the Turkish camp.

Mary. O, Mamma, but I don't like that, any more than I do the cruelties of the Turks themselves! And the Turks too were the best, for they only showed their spite on the dead bodies.

Mrs. M. The only palliation which can be found of any such unchristian conduct must be sought for in the generally barbarous spirit of the times, and in the exasperations on both sides against each other.

After the loss of St. Elmo, La Valette assembled his troops, and made them a speech and exhortation, in which he told them that he felt no doubt of their courage, and was assured they would "all follow the dictates of their own brave hearts." They soon had occasion for all their bravery. Mustapha proceeded to invest at once both Il Burgo and the castle of St. Michael; and directed seventy large cannon against their walls. Fortunately, before his works were carried so far as entirely to close all access by land, a reinforcement of six hundred men, including forty-seven knights, being favoured by a thick fog, contrived to land on the other side of the island, and reached the city in safety.

Mustapha's next plan was to transport his boats across the peninsula, from Marsa Muschetta into the grand port, that he might thus renew the attack on the town and the fort from the seaside, an attempt of which the knights had not had the least apprehension, as they knew that no boats

could be brought round by sea in the face of the fire from the castle of St. Angelo.

It happened that among the Turkish officers there was a man named Lascaris, a Greek by birth, who had been made a prisoner when a boy, and brought up a Mussulman. This man, filled with admiration at the noble intrepidity of the knights, betrayed to them the plan of the Pasha. La Valette immediately set to work to prevent it; and for this purpose raised a staccado, that is, caused stakes to be driven into the sea, in front of St. Michael, and joined them at the top by a chain, which completely precluded the approach of boats to the shore. These stakes were driven in during the night-time, and the work was completed in nine nights. Mustapha, astonished at finding himself thus circumvented, employed swimmers with hatchets at their girdles to cut away the stakes. But a party of the Maltese, who are excellent swimmers also, jumped into the sea carrying their swords in their mouths, and, attacking the Turks, drove them off the staccado. They returned, however, the next day, and fastened strong cables to the stakes, which they thus endeavoured to loosen and pull up. But before they could effect this, they were again discovered by the Maltese swimmers, who again attacked them in the water, and cut all their cables with their swords.

Mustapha still would not despair, and having got a great number of boats across the peninsula,

he launched them in the port. The command of these boats was given to a Greek renegade of the name of Candelissa, who having put his troops on board, proceeded to renew the attack on the staccado with drums beating, and hautboys and other musical instruments playing, preceded by a long boat filled with Mahometan priests, who were some of them imploring the assistance of heaven in psalms and hymns, and others holding open books in their hands from which they read aloud the bitterest imprecations against the Christians. But this attack also miscarried, the batteries of the fort keeping up a fire too heavy to withstand; and though a landing was at length effected, but with dreadful loss, on another part of the shore, the assailants were so bravely met by the knights, that they were compelled to make a precipitate retreat. Out of four thousand Turks and Algerines of whom this party had consisted, not five hundred escaped.

But we should never have done if I were to detail all that passed during this memorable siege. Mustapha, knowing by experience that nothing could subdue the resolution of the besieged, determined to tire them out by fatigue. His forces, notwithstanding his great losses, were still sufficiently numerous to enable him, by employing relays of soldiers, to keep up a continual assault. This he did accordingly for many weeks, and it is astonishing how the knights could resist it; but a

stout heart will enable the body to do a great deal. Amongst other devices, the Turks threw on the walls an enormous barrel filled with gunpowder and pieces of broken iron and nails, and on the point of exploding. The knights, instead of flying from it, rolled it down in an instant off the parapet on the assailants below, amongst whom it burst, and caused a most horrible carnage. Another time the grand master was wounded, but instead of leaving the walls to have his wound dressed, he concealed the hurt, lest his people should be alarmed. When reproached by his officers for exposing himself to danger too much, "Where," said he, "can I, at the age of seventy, die more honourably than on this spot, and amongst my brethren?"

Mary. Had the knights any women and children to help them here, as they had at Rhodes?

Mrs. M. There were the wives and families of the inhabitants of the town, as also those of the country peasantry, who had fled into the town for protection; and very good service they rendered. It is particularly mentioned in the histories that one breach was defended by some Maltese men, with women and children, who threw down stones and fire-works amongst the assailants. Mustapha at length, seeing that force would do little, hoped that famine at least would be his sure friend, and that, by cutting off all supplies, he must compel a surrender. But the catastrophe he thus hoped to

bring on his opponents was much nearer to himself. Some supplies that were coming to his camp were taken at sea by the Sicilian galleys, and this at a time when he had only twenty-five days' supply of flour in his camp, and his ammunition was almost spent. He now resolved, therefore, to exert himself to the utmost in a last effort, and to try the issue of a general assault.

Mary. Alas ! alas ! the dear knights ! how I tremble for them ! The poor women and children, too, they could in such a case do but little !

Mrs. M. They did what they could. Many of the women put on the dress of men, and placed themselves on the ramparts, that so the garrison might appear to be more numerous than it really was. Meanwhile the Sicilian fleet had at last sailed. The violence of the wind having separated the van-guard from the rest, the Viceroy, who commanded in person, returned to Sicily, and gave orders to disembark ; but the men refused to go on shore, and insisted on again setting sail, an insubordination which George at least will not blame. The Viceroy found himself obliged to yield to the general wish, and on the 6th of September the fleet arrived in the strait between Goza and Malta. The troops disembarked at day-break on the following morning, and the Viceroy returned immediately to Sicily. The reinforcement thus landed consisted of about 100 knights, and 600 veteran soldiers, besides many persons of various nations and ranks,

who had joined the expedition, burning with ardour to assist in the defence of the island.

George. How I should have liked to have been among them !

Mrs. M. They landed on the 7th of September, the morning of the day on which Mustapha intended to make his general assault ; and, without giving themselves time to rest, marched across the island, and had reached Citta Notabile, or Citta Vecchia, before the Turks knew that they were landed. In fact, Mustapha had expected that they would endeavour to force their way into the grand port, and had guarded the entrance with chains and barricadoes, and had kept up a good look out on their side. His surprise and consternation were excessive at finding that these troops were approaching his camp on the land side. Without waiting to learn their numbers, he immediately withdrew his garrison from Fort St. Elmo ; and abandoning his batteries and forts, embarked his men with the greatest precipitation, leaving behind him the greater part of his heavy artillery.

George. Hurrah ! hurrah !

Mrs. M. Softly and fairly, we have not yet quite got rid of our enemies ; for no sooner was Mustapha safe in his ship, than he learned that the mighty force he had fled from was only a small body of men, wearied by their voyage and hasty march, and without a commander. Upon this, ashamed of his panic, he ordered his men to disembark and face

the newly-arrived warriors, before they should have time to rest and refresh themselves. The men, who had been heartily tired of the long siege, and were rejoiced to be once more on board their ships, murmured exceedingly at this order, and for a time refused to obey. In the meantime the grand master had been actively employed. When he saw the Turks retreat, he lost not a moment in destroying their works, and filling up their trenches. Men, women, and children were busily employed all that day and the following night in this joyful occupation; and when the Turks relanded on the day following, they found that the posts which they had so lately abandoned could not now be recovered. The newly-arrived succours from Sicily had also been joined by a battalion of Maltese, and instead of waiting to be attacked, placed Alvarez de Sando (or La Sande), a brave and experienced knight, at their head, and rushed forwards to meet the enemy. The Turkish soldiers, who had been unwillingly driven to the combat, gave way at the first fire, and escaped to their ships. Even Mustapha himself, foaming with rage and disappointment, was forced to fly, and narrowly escaped being taken prisoner. Such was the eagerness of the pursuers, that some of them cast off part of their armour, that they might the more easily overtake the runaways. This imprudence cost them dear, several men being killed by a body of Algerines, who had been stationed to protect the embarkation. These Alge-

rines, however, were soon dispersed; and the knights, intoxicated with their victory, rushed after the fugitives, sword in hand, even up to their middles in the sea.

The shattered remains of the Turkish army were at last got on board, and sailed away, having passed nearly four months (from the 18th of May to the 8th of September) before those impregnable walls which they had dared to attack, and having left behind them, as was computed, the dead bodies of 30,000 of their comrades. When Solyman received the dispatch which brought him the intelligence of this termination of the enterprise of his boasted armament, nothing could exceed his rage: he trampled the paper under his feet, and swore that the next year he would fit out a greater force than before, and would come in person, and would exterminate the whole order.

Mary. O the poor, dear, brave fellows! how I tremble for them!

Mrs. M. Solyman immediately ordered a new armament to be fitted out, on a scale which seemed to justify his menaces; but all his measures were subverted by the destruction of his arsenal at Constantinople, which was set on fire by the grand master's spies, and burned down.

Richard. Ah! Mamma, I felt very angry that Solyman should have spies at Rhodes, but I do not feel at all angry that the grand master should have spies at Constantinople; and yet in reality

there is as much harm in the one thing as in the other.

Mrs. M. It is said that in war all things are fair.

Mary. Then I am sure I wish there could be nothing but peace.

George. And yet, Mary, you like to hear about battles and sieges, and those sorts of things.

Mary. Yes, so I do, when they happened a long time ago ; but I should be very sorry to see or hear anything of wars and battles now.

Richard. Pray, Mamma, go on ! I want very much to know what was done at Malta when Mustapha sailed away.

Mrs. M. The first moments, after the Turks were fairly gone, were given to a pious gratitude for the signal deliverance from so great a danger. The grand master's next care was to bestow thanks on the officers, and rewards on the soldiers who had so seasonably come to his relief; and several days were devoted to rejoicing and feasting. But never was there so melancholy a scene in which to rejoice. The town was in ruins, the fortifications broken down, the cannon almost all worn out or burst, the villages destroyed, the people everywhere reduced to poverty, and all the surviving knights either wounded or maimed, or worn out by, fatigue, and in the most forlorn and distressed condition.

George. How comfortably they must have felt when they got their walls mended up again !

Richard. And the villages rebuilt !

Mrs. M. All these things were done in time, and in a surprisingly short time too, when we consider that the treasury of the order was nearly exhausted, and the order itself reduced greatly in numbers. Nearly 300 of the knights had fallen in the siege, besides about 8000 of the soldiers and inhabitants. I do not know whether the 8th of September is still remembered in Malta, but as long as the island remained under the rule of the knights, it was kept as a day of great solemnity. The grand standard of the order was carried by one of the knights, habited in the dress of an old crusader. A magnificent sword also, which Philip II. sent to La Valette after the siege, as a compliment to his bravery, used to be carried in this procession.

Mary. I am glad the King of Spain had the grace to send poor La Valette a present, after all the torment his viceroy had caused him.

Mrs. M. The hilt of the sword is richly ornamented with diamonds, and it is still preserved in one of the churches in Il Burgo. When Philip sent it to La Valette, he said he sent it to him as the greatest captain in Europe, and desired that he would use it in defence of Christianity. The Pope also complimented him in his way, by sending him a cardinal's hat, an honour which, however, the grand master declined accepting.

George. Why, to be sure, a cardinal's hat and a knight's helmet would not fit very well together!

Mrs. M. After the disorders occasioned by the

siege had been in some degree repaired, the grand master began to consider about removing the residence of the knights to some more suitable place than Il Burgo, which was now found, by the experience of the late siege, to be most inconveniently situated. It was, for this reason, finally resolved to build a new town, which should be in every way worthy of the order, and the peninsula called Monte Scebarros, on which is placed the Fort of St. Elmo, was the site determined on. The plan of this new town is said to have been designed by La Valette himself, and the place is still called after his name. Several of the princes of Europe gave money to the work. A suitable residence was planned out for the grand master; each language had a piece of ground for its respective *Inn*, the name given to the hotels, or dwellings of the knights; and when the fortifications were finished, each language had its own especial bulwark assigned, which it was bound to protect in case of danger. Materials and engineers having been procured from Italy, the first stone of the new town was laid, March 28, 1566. Every one took his share of employment according to his station and ability. Knights, soldiers, and citizens all assisted in their turns: some worked, others overlooked the workmen, the grand master himself taking as active a part in it as any one. While some were thus busy on land, others were employed in furthering the work, either by the conveyance of materials by sea, or in cruising against the Turks.

for prizes, which they sold for the purpose of aiding to defray its expense.

On the 19th of July, 1568, in the midst of this interesting and animating occupation, La Valette was taken suddenly ill while on horseback, and was brought back to the convent in which he at that time resided, in a high fever. While he was still suffering from this attack, he received information that the Turks were meditating a fresh attempt upon Malta. The agitation caused by this intelligence augmented his illness, and he died on the 21st of August in the same year. He had desired to be buried in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Victory, which was at this time building at his own expense. But this chapel not being completed at the time of his death, his remains were deposited in the church of Notre Dame de Philermo, and afterwards, when the chapel was finished, were removed there with much funeral pomp. The coffin was placed on board the admiral's galley, which was dismasted, and towed by two other galleys hung with black cloth. The banners, standards, and arms which La Valette had taken from the Turks, were also towed by the same galleys, as we are told, through the water. Then followed two of La Valette's own galleys, both hung with black cloth, and having on board the new grand master, and all the principal knights, with the officers and servants of the deceased, some of them carrying flambeaux, and others the colours taken from the Turks. This

funeral procession moved in solemn state from the grand port to the harbour of Marsa Muschetta. On landing, the body was preceded by priests chanting the service of the church, and followed by the grand master, and the rest of the procession to the chapel, where the ceremony was concluded, and the body consigned to its final resting place.

CONVERSATION V.

[Years after Christ 1568—1771.]

George. I LIKE the history of Malta very much ; I hope there is a great deal more of it.

Mrs. M. I might make a great deal more of it, if I were to give you every minute detail ; but as that would only encumber your memory without yielding you any great pleasure or profit, I shall pass very lightly over the next two centuries, which contain little of interest except some remarkable actions between the Turkish and the Maltese galleys.

La Valette's immediate successor was Peter di Monti, in whose reign of four years the city of Valetta was completed ; and on March 18, 1571, he and the knights took possession of their new convent, as they chose still to call their habitation, with much solemnity, and the seat of government was removed from the Citta Vittoriosa to the new city. In the same year, three Maltese galleys bore a distinguished part in the memorable sea-fight at Lepanto. The island itself has never, since the great siege, been openly attacked by the Turks, nor suffered any molestation by them, except from some secret plots, which happily came to nothing. The most remarkable of these occurred about the year

1750, at a time when the knights had just concluded a long truce with the sultan. Notwithstanding the truce, each party, both knights and Turks, retained the slaves whom they had taken in the previous wars. Some Christian slaves, who were employed as rowers in a Turkish galley, in which was the Pasha of Rhodés, mutinied, and seizing the vessel, brought the pasha prisoner to Malta. The grand master, Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca, was somewhat embarrassed what to do with him. He was too noble a prize to be lightly relinquished; and yet the newly-made truce with the Porte forbade the detaining him prisoner at Malta. In this dilemma, Pinto took a middle course, and made a present of him to the King of France, Louis XV.

Richard. Those middle courses are seldom good courses. I like for people to act boldly in a straightforward manner. If it was not right for them to keep the pasha, they should, like honourable men, have at once sent him home.

Mrs. M. And the event proved that it would probably have been the best policy so to have done. The pasha was consigned over to the care of the French ambassador, and treated as if he belonged to the French king. A house with a charming garden was given him to live in: a magnificent stipend was assigned for the expenses of his household, and he was permitted to have his own servants about him. He was not allowed to go abroad, but all the Turks in the island were admitted to

have free access to him whenever they pleased. The number of Turks at that time in Malta was estimated at about 4000. Some of them had lived there many years, and were so happy and comfortable, that they had no wish to return to their own country. Indeed, they were in general so much handier and more alert than the Maltese, that the knights much preferred them as domestic servants, and about their persons. Even the grand master's two confidential valets were Turks. The ordinary slaves who were employed in the galleys, or in the public works, were of course strictly guarded and confined. But these domestics lived with all the freedom of hired servants, and were in general treated with great humanity. One would have thought that the confidence thus placed in them would have produced fidelity; and so probably it did, till a temptation too strong for them came in their way. The first designer of the conspiracy seems to have been a negro, one of the crew of mutineers in the galley of the Pasha of Rhodes. This man, being discontented with his share of the reward for the capture, vowed to be revenged. He gained over the Turkish slaves to his plan. The pasha also became a party to it, and wrote letters to the several Mahometan states, informing them of what was going forward, and urging them to second by the support of their galleys at sea the treachery which was to be enacted on shore. The Maltese, as I think we have already remarked, are a people

exceedingly fond of processions and celebrations. One of their great festival days is the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, when the whole population of Malta assembles at Citta Notabile, dressed in holiday garments, which are produced only on these great occasions. The morning is passed in attending the services of the church, and the night in dancing in the groves of the Boschetto. This then was the day which the conspirators chose for the execution of their purpose, and they fixed their time at that part of the afternoon in which the inhabitants of these hot parts of Europe generally take their refreshment of a nap called a *siesta*. One of Pinto's Turkish valets had entered into the plot, and had promised to murder his master while he was enjoying his siesta, and to expose his head on the grand balcony of the palace. This was to be the signal for the rest of the slaves to massacre also their masters, and they were then to make a rush at the guards, who were on duty in the bastions, whom they reckoned upon easily overpowering. At the same time the galley slaves were to rise on their officers; and the Mahometan fleet, which had been appointed to be in readiness off the island, was to sail into the harbour, and to take possession of the city. The conspiracy, though known to so many, was yet kept so secret, that none of the knights, nor any of the other Christians on the island, had the smallest suspicion of it. But, happily, when it was almost ripe to be carried into

effect, the whole was discovered by one of those slight circumstances, which might seem to be merely accidental, if we did not know that there is a kind and overruling Providence which always watches over the affairs of men, and often saves us from evils which we in our blindness are rushing upon. The negro, the first and most active agent in the business, had found amongst the grand master's guard of soldiers a young Persian who had fled from his own country for some crime, and had enlisted in the Maltese service. This man the negro found little difficulty in seducing ; and the part which he persuaded him to undertake in the business was to withdraw the charges from his comrades' muskets. There was also a Jew who knew something of the plot, though it does not appear that he had any part to act in it. This Jew kept a coffee-house frequented almost wholly by the Turkish slaves. The negro and the Persian, one day when they were at this place, had a warm dispute, and from words proceeded to blows, till at last the negro attempted to stab the other, who, however, escaped out of the coffee-house unhurt. When the Persian was gone, the Jew began to remonstrate with the negro for his violence, and the negro then fell upon him, but after some altercation left the house. The wife of the Jew, it should seem, was not in the secret of the conspiracy. During these quarrels some words escaped the disputants which gave her great alarm, and convinced her that

some scheme was in agitation against the state. As soon as she was alone with her husband, she besought him to have nothing to do in any such matter, and to disclose all he knew to the grand master. The man followed this good advice, and made the best of his way to the palace. In the mean time the Persian also, believing that his life was no longer safe, went and disclosed to his commanding officer the whole affair. The officer, whose name was De Viguier, was exceedingly astonished at such a disclosure, and after putting many questions to the man, was convinced that there was too much truth in what he said, and took him without loss of time to the grand master's palace, where the Jew also arrived soon afterwards. The Persian and the Jew were then confronted, and their accounts tallied so exactly, that the guilt of the negro could be no longer doubted. He was immediately apprehended, and on being brought before the tribunal of knights who were assembled on this occasion, he declared every particular of the plot, and revealed the names of several of the conspirators, who were of course taken up. The rest, fearful of being betrayed, determined to attempt the massacre immediately, and pressed the valet to make the beginning, as was agreed upon. During the course of the day, the man entered Pinto's chamber several times without being sent for ; and as often, his heart, I suppose, failing him, left the room. Pinto, who was a man of singular gentle-

ness, was yet annoyed at these troublesome interruptions, but without the smallest suspicion that they proceeded from any other motive than officiousness. At last he said to him, in his usual mild tone : *Che voi, figlio ? cosa voi ?* that is, What do you want, my son ; what would you have ? The only reply the Turk made, was to burst into tears, and to leave the room. The next day he was impeached by one of his accomplices, and confessed that it had been his intention to have murdered his master. The grand master was shocked and grieved beyond measure at this discovery, which at first he could hardly bring himself to believe.

For some time the examination of the criminals went on without any mention of the name of the Pasha of Rhodes, although every one suspected the share he had in the business. At last his secretary confessed the part his master had taken, and showed the letters which he had caused to be written to Constantinople, and to the other Turkish ports of the Mediterranean. This discovery so incensed the populace against the pasha, that they called aloud to have him given up to justice, and were only to be pacified by his being shut up close prisoner in the fort of St. Elmo, from whence he was conveyed to Constantinople by a French frigate. The other ringleaders were executed, and the rest of the slaves were from this time put under stricter regulations. Even those menials who were allowed to attend on their masters by day, were

shut up in prisons and places of confinement at night. And thus ended this horrible plot, a plot which had been even more dangerous than the great siege, and the escape from which has ever since been celebrated amongst the most solemn anniversaries of the Maltese.—Before I quit this subject, I must not forget to say, that the Jew, by whose means the island had been preserved, was rewarded by a pension for himself and his descendants. A house was also assigned him, and the service he had rendered the state was commemorated by an inscription over the door.

Mary. How glad that Jew's wife must have been, that she persuaded her husband to go and tell everything to the grand master!

Richard. And the Persian: what became of him? for I think he deserved as much as the Jew.

Mrs. M. He was liberally rewarded, but proved a very worthless fellow, and was at last sent out of the island.

Mary. I think, Mamma, that this story shows how much better it would have been for the knights if they had not had any slaves at all. And indeed, I don't see what business Christians have to make slaves.

Mrs. M. I quite agree with you, Mary. The excuse of the knights was, that the Turks made slaves of the Christians, but the bad example of others, whether Christians or infidels, ought to be no rule for us. As I am relating events, and not

reasoning upon them, I must tell things as they were. One of the uses of history is to teach us wisdom by the experience of the past, and to show us, that however people may be provoked to do things that are wrong in themselves, it is a fault that commonly brings its own punishment along with it.

CONVERSATION VI.

[From A.D. 1773, to the Taking of the Island by the French in 1798.]

Mrs. M. We left off yesterday in the grand mastership of Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca, who died in 1773, after a reign of thirty-one years, an unusually long term; for as the grand masters were generally chosen late in life, their tenure of office seldom lasted so long as that which is possessed by hereditary sovereigns. In the seven hundred years, during which the Knights of St. John continued to be incorporated as an order or political body, there was a succession of no less than seventy grand masters. In the same period of time there were only thirty-one sovereigns of England, and twenty-nine of France. Pinto was the sixty-eighth grand master, so that we are very nearly come to the end of the list. He was succeeded by Ximenes, a quiet, harmless man, and one who had so little of the ancient warrior about him, that he suffered the Maltese priests to raise a rebellion against the knights, and to possess themselves of the fort of St. Elmo.

George. But the knights must have been as much to blame for that as their master.

Mrs. M. To own the honest truth, our friends the knights were by this time very much degenerated. Though they still kept up a form of warfare with the Turks, it was in a very quiet sort of way, and afforded them few opportunities of showing their prowess. Their wealth had accumulated exceedingly, and the luxurious style of their living was by no means a specimen of monastic austerity. In fact, to be a Knight of Malta was no longer to be the champion of Christendom, and to brave hardship and danger, but to be a very affluent gentleman, living in peace and plenty.

George. Then I am glad we are come to the end of their history. I don't care to hear anything more about them.

Mrs. M. These affluent gentlemen, however, though living in peace and plenty, instead of storming castles, and fighting the Turks, if they did not make their name renowned abroad, yet made their people happy at home; and the Maltese, finding themselves very comfortable under their rule, took very little part in the disturbances excited by the priests, which were soon quelled.

Ximenes died in 1775, and was succeeded by a French knight of the illustrious house of Rohan, a man of an extremely amiable character. Mr. Brydone, who visited Malta in 1770, speaks very highly of him. During his grand mastership the knights had a noble opportunity of proving that though the military spirit of their order had de-

clined, its charitable spirit subsisted still, in its full force. I think you know that, in the early part of the year 1783, Calabria, and the opposite shores of Sicily were visited by one of the most calamitous earthquakes that modern history has had to record. The first shock was felt on the 5th of February, and was followed by others at different intervals, till the 28th of March; but none of these was so terrible as the first. In Calabria, in particular, the destruction was almost universal: four hundred towns and villages were destroyed, and many thousands of the inhabitants buried under their ruins. Indeed it was said that as many as forty thousand persons perished there, and in Sicily. Hills were precipitated into valleys, and stopping up the course of the rivers, turned, in some places, fertile meadows into lakes. In the plains, the ground opened in large cracks which swallowed up both flocks and cattle. The peasants fled they knew not whither, and many of them were overtaken by the destruction they fled from. The prince of Scilla, whose town stood on the famous rock of that name, near the straits of Messina, fearful that the foundations would give way, fled with his people to the sea-shore for safety. But on the very spot to which they thus fled they were caught and overwhelmed by the rebound of an enormous wave, which swept them all, prince and people, into the sea. In Sicily, the calamity was chiefly confined to Messina. But the devas-

tation there was horrible in the extreme. The entrance of the harbour was guarded and adorned by a lofty pharos. On the quays which lined the bay stood rows of houses that resembled palaces. The city itself was rich, splendid and populous, and the country around it beautiful and luxuriant. All this was in one day destroyed. The city was made a heap of ruins, and the country round it a scene of desolation.

The news of this dreadful earthquake reached Malta about six in the evening of the 5th of February. At that season of the year, the galleys were always laid up in ordinary. But the knights immediately ordered them to sea, and toiled themselves all night in preparing them. On the following morning they were already on their way to give all the assistance they could to the unhappy sufferers. Besides an abundant stock of provisions, they took with them tents in which to shelter the houseless wretches, and also beds and chests of medicine. They also took with them some of their most skilful surgeons, and, in short, forgot or omitted nothing which a wise humanity could suggest. They first made for Reggio on the coast of Calabria, where a most sad and appalling spectacle presented itself. The Chevalier de Boisgelin was one of the knights who accompanied this expedition, and in his history of Malta he gives a full account of it. He says that when the knights

approached the shore, they saw it lined with a multitude of persons half naked, pale, and worn out with fatigue. In the midst of these miserable objects stood their venerable pastor, the bishop of Reggio, who appeared, he says, like a tender parent surrounded by his children. The general of the galleys informed the bishop of the relief he had brought, but the good man would only accept of fifty of the beds, and a part of the provisions, desiring that the remainder might be reserved for the sufferers at Messina, whose necessities, he feared, were even greater than those of his own people. The knights then crossed over to Messina. There the pharos, which had seemed to have been built to last for ages, was partly destroyed: a huge chasm was made in the walls of the citadel: the splendid houses, that had only two days before been the ornament of the quays, now lay in ruins; nor indeed was there a house in the town, a town of forty thousand inhabitants, which had not been injured more or less. One tottering wall was all that remained of the cathedral. Of the inhabitants, those who were not buried under the ruins of their dwellings, wandered about in a distracted state, half naked and famishing. Some had found shelter in hovels, hastily constructed of such materials as were at hand, while others had found no better resting-places than holes dug in the ground, into which they crept whole families together.

And those thought themselves well off who could procure a rug, or some other covering, to form a roof to their miserable burrows.

The knights, on reaching the place, sent to notify their arrival to the commandant, and requested to be allowed to set up an hospital on shore, for the sick and wounded.

Mary. Now, George, I hope you are good friends with the knights again. For now you see they are doing as they did at first, setting up a hospital, and attending the sick.

Mrs. M. You may imagine the mortification of the knights at the answer they received from the commandant, who, instead of accepting this charitable offer with joy, replied, that he must decline it, until he could have instructions from the viceroy at Palermo.

Richard. And let all the people die, while he was asking instructions! I never heard of such a cold-hearted wretch! Can you guess what could be the motive for his refusal?

Mrs. M. The man was a Neapolitan. Perhaps it was Neapolitan pride, perhaps Spanish etiquette, or perhaps jealousy of the knights. But it is only losing our time to indulge in any such vain conjectures. The knights, greatly mortified by the rejection of their well-meant offers, were more than half inclined to hoist sail and go back to Reggio, where they knew that their services would be kindly accepted. They, however, first determined to go on

shore, and wait upon the commandant, who made a parade of receiving them as if nothing was the matter; for, although they found him driven from his stately palace, and dwelling in a temporary wooden barrack, yet all within appeared rich and well furnished: they were greeted with the sound of music and with refreshments of various kinds, and excepting the homeliness of the building itself, there was nothing to lead them to suppose that prosperity and abundance did not still reign in Messina. But when they left the presence of the commandant, a very different scene presented itself. I will not distress you by describing the miseries to which De Boisgelin tells us that he was witness. The knights, provoked as they were, had not the heart to turn away from them, and persevered in pressing the relief which they were desirous to afford, till they at length obtained permission to send their surgeons to attend on some of the wounded, and afterwards to distribute food of all kinds amongst the sick and famishing multitude. In the discharge of these kind offices, the knights remained three weeks at Messina; and when they departed, the general and the captains of the galleys distributed money from their own private funds among the poor unfortunates whom they had already done so much to assist. They also concealed, as far as they could, the day of their departure, that they might avoid exciting among them any tumult of gratitude. They then visited Reggio a second time

before they returned to Malta, and left with the thankful people there the tents and the beds, and the other necessaries and comforts which the commandant of Messina had not chosen to accept.

George. Well, mamma, I am now quite good friends again with the knights, and must allow that they were as well employed in this kind service, as if they had been slaying the whole race of Mahometans, and that they deserved the peace and plenty which they enjoyed at home.

Mary. If you please, mamma, before you go on with the history of the knights, will you tell us a little more about the earthquake.

Mrs. M. Sir William Hamilton, who was at that time the English ambassador at Naples, visited the scene of desolation in the month of May, about three weeks after the first shock, and gathered from the survivors what particulars he could. The winter of 1782-3 had been unusually rainy. The first shock began with a sort of trembling of the earth, preceded by an awful stillness in the air. Then the trembling became more violent, till the motion was like the waves of the sea; and large trees were so shaken by it, that their tops were seen to touch the earth as they rocked to and fro. Sometimes hollow sounds were heard in the ground, like the explosion of a mine. Sometimes flames were seen bursting out of cracks formed in the earth, and these cracks were afterwards found commonly filled with water. All these things, with the moving of

hills and overthrowing of dwellings, and the universal destruction of property, continued to fill the minds of the sufferers with horror and despair. Sir William Hamilton, in his tour, came to the place where Polistene had stood, a town that had contained six thousand inhabitants. He says, "I travelled four days in the plain, in the midst of such misery as cannot be described. To pass through so rich a country, and not see a single house standing, is melancholy indeed. Wherever a house stood, there you see a heap of ruins or a temporary hut, with two or three miserable mourning figures sitting at the door, and here and there a maimed man, woman, or child, crawling on crutches. Instead of a town (the town of Polistene), you see a confused heap of ruins, and round about them numbers of poor huts, or barracks, and a large one to serve as a church, with the church bells hanging on a sort of low gibbet, every inhabitant having a doleful countenance, and wearing some token of having lost a relative." The ruin of this town was instantaneous, and out of six thousand inhabitants, two thousand one hundred perished at once. Out of the ruins of a house at Oppido, two girls, whom Sir William saw, were dug out alive. One of them, who was sixteen years old, had been buried eleven days, during which she had no food, but had a little glimmering of light through an opening, which had enabled her to keep an account of the number of days she had passed. At the time of

the calamity she had a child of between five and six months old in her arms, which died on the fourth day. The other poor girl was of the age of eleven. She had been under the ruins six days, and in so confined and distressing a posture, that one of her hands, pressing against her cheek, had nearly worn a hole through it. What was very extraordinary, the elder girl had not suffered in health. Her great inconvenience was a difficulty in swallowing solid food. Her chief craving was for water.

Mary. People may say what they please about English fogs and English bad weather; but I am sure it is better to live in such a climate as ours, than in the sunshine, and under the blue skies, of a country like Italy, where you are liable to be buried alive.

Mrs. M. I hope, my dear child, you will always be contented with, and thankful for, the place and circumstances in which Providence has placed you. Every country has its advantages and disadvantages, every situation and station its good and its evil. But that Providence which knows whereof we are made, alone knows what is best for us individually; and it is our duty to rest satisfied with our appointed lot.

Richard. And now, if you please, let us go back to our friends in Malta.

Mrs. M. Our friends at Malta were at this time,

to all appearance, at the height of worldly prosperity. But it was only a calm before a storm. The French revolution broke out, and involved, as far as it extended, the ancient order of St. John of Jerusalem in the general ruin of all established institutions.

Mary. But what had the knights of Malta to do with the Revolution in France? How could it affect them?

Mrs. M. A great proportion of the members of the order were natives of that country, and they had very large possessions in it. And on the plea that the founder (Gerard) was a Frenchman, and that three of the languages, Provence, Auvergne, and France, were French also, the French Government, whenever anything was to be got by it, chose to consider the knights as subjects of France, and treated them accordingly. The first breath of the gathering storm came on them in the shape of a demand of one-third of the rents of all their estates in France. As the same tax was also levied on all other proprietors of land, the knights paid it without thinking it any peculiar hardship on themselves. But the next attack came expressly home to them. All their possessions of every sort were seized on as public property; amongst the rest, the fortress of the Temple in Paris, which on the abolition of the order of Templars had been given to the Knights Hospitallers, and had been ever since

their place of residence in the French capital. It was now converted by the conventional government into a state prison.

Mary. Ah, mamma, I remember that sad history of the little dauphin, and the queen and princesses, being imprisoned in the Temple!

Mrs. M. The knights, who, you know, were always persons of noble birth, were denounced as nobles, and those who could not make their escape from France were thrown into prison, and otherwise persecuted. Nor were these persecutions confined to France. When the French carried their arms into Italy, the property of the knights there also was claimed and seized as belonging to subjects of France. After being thus stripped, the knights had little left to them except their rock, and some commanderies in Spain and Portugal, which continued to yield them a scanty revenue. They had also some estates in Germany, which had as yet escaped the fraternal embrace of the republican army. At the same time that the resources of the order were thus curtailed, the expenses at Malta were considerably increased. A number of the French knights who had lost everything they possessed in their native country, now sought from their grand master a shelter and a home. The excellent Rohan, though in extreme old age, and himself worn down by the calamities of the time, received and maintained, like a kind father, all who came to him. That he might be enabled to do so,

he put an end to the almost royal state in which he had before lived, and even limited the expense of his own table to two shillings a day. What a contrast to the splendid banquets of men who had always used to dine in state, and to be attended like sovereign princes.

Mary. I dare say the good old man had more pleasure in maintaining the poor destitute knights, than in seeing before him all the dainties in the world.

Mrs. M. The last public act of the order was, moreover, a most generous one. The knights lent the unfortunate Louis XVI. the sum of five hundred thousand livres, to enable him to effect his flight to Varennes. The unfortunate result of that attempt must have been severely felt by Rohan. However, about this time, when the fortunes of the brotherhood were at the lowest ebb, a most unexpected friend rose up, to whose timely intervention it is probably owing that the order of the Hospitallers has still any, even a nominal, existence.

Richard. You seem to speak, mamma, as if it was a good thing for the order to continue in existence. Now since it had left off fighting with the infidels, I do not see any particular use it could have.

Mrs. M. I have nothing, my dear Richard, to answer to you, except that I cannot but regret the fall of every ancient institution, which has rendered any noble services to the world. This society, too,

is the last remaining link which connects the present times with those of the crusades. For seven hundred years its laws and institutions have been always the same; and though the observance of them had been in most points relaxed, yet as an order of *Hospitallers* its principles were kept up in full force to the last. The doors of the Hospital at Malta were always open to the sick of every nation, and the labours of charity, which were there rendered, never ceased.

George. And now, mamma, I want to know who this unexpected friend could be.

Mrs. M. No less a person, I can assure you, than that strange, unaccountable being, the Emperor Paul of Russia. The order had anciently possessed some commanderies in Poland. But these, in some of the distractions of that turbulent country, had been unjustly seized on. In the partition of Poland between the Emperor of Germany, the King of Prussia, and the Empress Catherine, the territory in which these commanderies were situate fell to the share of Russia. Catherine restored them. Their revenue was not considerable, but in the present reduced state of the order was of great importance to the knights; and Paul, when he succeeded his mother in 1797, augmented it to the sum of 300,000 florins (7500*l.* sterling) a year, and took the order under his especial protection against the aggressions of the French.

Mary. O what good news for that good old grand master!

Mrs. M. Alas ! he never heard it. Rohan was on his death-bed when the messenger from Petersburgh arrived at Malta, and he died without the intelligence reaching him. With him the order lost its greatest stay, and the knights all that in their present condition could hold them together. It was now hard to find a person who, in the critical circumstances of the times, could be a fit successor to him in the grandmastership. At last Hompesch, a German knight, was elected, and a worse choice could scarcely have been made. The first public act which he was called on to perform was one, however, of no great difficulty. It was to send an embassy of thanks to the Emperor Paul for the benefits which he had conferred on the order. As a further token of their gratitude, the knights sent also to the emperor the cross which had been worn by La Valette, and which, since his death, had been preserved by them with great reverence. Paul received the ambassador very graciously ; and was formally invested by him with the ensigns of the order, of which he assumed the title of protector. At the ambassador's desire, the empress and the princesses, and the rest of the royal family, were next admitted into it, in the like form, and with all suitable solemnity.

George. And I hope with suitable gravity also.

It must have been a droll sight to have seen empresses and princesses dubbed Knights of Malta.

Mrs. M. It certainly would have startled L'Isle Adam, and La Valette, and especially Gerard of Provence. But the truth was, that the emperor was insane, and that the ambassador did all he could to flatter him in his follies, in the hope that he would stand as a wall of defence between the knights and the increasing dangers which menaced them. For the French, not satisfied with stripping the order of all its possessions in France and Italy, had now a design upon Malta itself. Bonaparte, who had lately conquered Italy, and whose influence was beginning to be felt, had signified to the Directory his opinion that Malta *ought* to belong to France. The Directory for some time combated this opinion, and affirmed that France had no right to interfere with the knights, who had always preserved a strict neutrality towards all the rest of the European states, and had on many occasions been of signal service to the Republic, by giving its vessels shelter in their harbour, and receiving its invalid seamen into their hospital. But these were slight reasons in the eyes of Napoleon. He was setting out on his grand expedition for the conquest of Egypt, and he knew that Malta, if he could possess himself of it in his way, would be a very useful and also a very rich acquisition. He therefore persevered in urging his scheme on the Directory, and finally obtained their permission to

make the attempt. He was well aware that the island, if properly defended, could not speedily be reduced, and as he had no time to spare for a long siege, he resolved to try the more expeditious method of obtaining his object by treachery. A M. Pousielques, who had some relations merchants in Malta, was sent there to sound the inclinations of the people. Other agents were also sent to disseminate republican principles, and promote dissents among the Maltese against their governors. The French knights were also tampered with, and it is but too certain that some of them were induced by bribes, and other base temptations, to betray their friends and the state. M. Canuson, the French resident, or consul, was very active in these secret transactions, and all things being thus prepared, little was left for the French general to do but to come and take possession.

In the mean time the French fleet and armament at Toulon was got ready for sea, and the design on Egypt had been kept so secret that all Europe was in alarm, and every maritime state on the watch, to see on what quarter of the world the storm would burst. But as you all know the history of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt, I shall not dwell upon it here, excepting as far as Malta is concerned.

A short time before the sailing of the main fleet, a squadron of eighteen ships of war, under the command of admiral Brueys who was afterwards,

as you may recollect, blown up in the Orient, in the battle of the Nile, made its appearance off the harbour. One of these ships steered immediately with all sails set towards Fort St. Elmo, the captain pretending that he had sprung a leak, which required instant attention, and on that plea requesting permission to enter the harbour. The request was immediately granted, and the ship remained eight days in the harbour. During these eight days the admiral was profuse in his professions of amity and of good-will to the grand master, and gave him repeated assurances of the friendly feelings of the republic towards the order. But all this time he was taking the opportunity of exploring the state of the fortifications, and was holding secret communications with the malcontents of the island, and his boats were busily employed in taking soundings of the coast, and in examining the most favourable places for the disembarkation of troops.

Mary. But what was the grand master about all this time? He must have been very stupid not to have found out what was going on.

Mrs. M. He was exactly what you say, very stupid; and his knights were almost as stupid as himself, and quite as helpless. Those that were not corrupted by French influence were bewildered, irresolute, and knew not how to act. They had no confidence in their chief—they had no confidence in one another. The order might be compared to

the faggot in the fable, which was no longer bound together, and so lost its strength. The number of the knights was, to be sure, not so great as formerly. There were only three hundred and thirty-two, and of these fifty were old and infirm, and incapable of active service. Still, had they been united, staunch to their vows, and true to one another, as heretofore, they might have preserved, if not their island, at least the honour of their name. For although their foreign resources were nearly all cut off, still their walls were in a complete state of defence, and it was in their power to have made, if not a successful, yet a long resistance. Exclusive of the knights, the island contained guards and militia to the number of six thousand men, which might be increased to ten thousand.

Notwithstanding the supineness of the grand master, and the influence of the French intrigues in the island, the French admiral thought it too strong to be carried by a sudden attack. After thanking the grand master for the kindness with which he had been received, and the alacrity with which his wants had been supplied, he therefore sailed away with his squadron. He made also to his own government a similar report of the friendly maner in which he had been treated at Malta, for which the French authorities returned their due thanks to the Maltese agent at Paris.

On June 6, 1798, the first division of the grand armament from Toulon appeared off the island.

At the same time two Greek vessels also arrived, pretending to be laden with corn, but which were in reality freighted with arms from France, to be distributed among the disaffected Maltese. The better to deceive the grand master, these vessels had taken a circuitous course, that it might appear as if they had come from the Archipelago. Hompesch was alarmed at the arrival of these numerous and warlike guests, and hesitated on admitting any of them into his ports. But the French resident strove to banish his fears, by telling him that he had received orders from General Bonaparte to assure him that nothing hostile was intended against the island, or against the order, which had ever been regarded as an ally by the French republic. As a still further assurance, Dolomieu, a French general on board the fleet, wrote letters to a friend of his, Bodon de Ransijat, one of the knights who had embraced the French interest, in which he made to him repeated declarations of the good and pacific intentions of the commander-in-chief.

George. Ah! We may guess what Bonaparte meant by these good intentions.

Mrs. M. His real meaning was soon sufficiently apparent. On the evening of the 9th of June, he arrived with the remainder of the fleet, and demanded entrance into the harbour for his ships, and liberty for his troops to land. Hompesch and his council did not like to grant, and yet were afraid

to refuse, this imperious demand. They therefore made answer, that consistently with the rules of the order, they could admit only four ships at once, but that they might all come in by turns, four at a time, and that they should receive every assistance which they might require. This answer was taken on board the admiral's ship by the resident, who was himself employed to write a reply to it, which was sent on shore at daybreak on the following morning, by an officer commanding a body of troops, which then advanced to their disembarkation. In this reply the resident states that the general was very indignant at the grand master's refusal, and therefore determined to take by force what ought to have been granted to him from hospitality. "The general," he adds, "will not permit me to return to a city which he shall for the future be obliged to treat as an enemy, and which has now no resource left but in the generosity of the general, who has given strict orders that the religion, customs, and property of the Maltese shall be most scrupulously respected."

Mary. Brother, does not Malta put you in mind of the poor little lamb in the fable, who was drinking at the same stream with the wolf?

Mrs. M. Few people understood the art of picking a convenient quarrel better than Bonaparte. In the course of this day, June 20, the troops effected their landing in several different points, and were joined by all the disaffected among the

Maltese. They laid everything waste; and by mid-day were in possession of almost the whole island, excepting the capital. Some small bodies of the militia made a resolute stand, and defended their houses and villages with a courage which cost several of the marauders their lives. But all resistance was soon at an end. Many of the inhabitants fled for shelter to Valetta, where the walls still presented a bold aspect to the assailants, but, alas! wanted the stout hearts that should have made them impregnable. The terror and confusion without the city was equalled by the disorder that reigned within. The populace rose on the knights, particularly on the French knights, accusing them of having sold the order to the French, and massacred several of them. The grand master, instead of exerting himself to quell these tumults, remained trembling in his palace, at one time sending intreaties to the insurgent crowds, and at another attempting to bribe them; but neither his entreaties nor his promises availed anything; the government was totally disorganized, and military discipline at an end. So great indeed was the confusion, that some of the militia shot one another in the streets, each believing that he had encountered an enemy.

Such was the state of things in Valetta during the greater part of June the 10th and 11th. On the second of these days, some of the citizens went to the palace, and called earnestly on the grand master to come forward and exert himself for the

peace and security of the city and inhabitants ; and it is thought that if he could have been resolute, the tumults might yet have been quelled, and some union formed against the common enemy ; but the only answer they could obtain from him was, that he would assemble the council to deliberate on this request.

George. Deliberate, indeed ? a fine time for deliberation !

Mrs. M. While the council was assembling, the tumult increased, and the massacres, which had abated, recommenced, and the city was in a worse condition than ever. When the council met, the measure resolved on was to request an armistice of twenty-four hours from the French general. The answer of Bonaparte was, that he would enter the city on the following day, and would then make known in what manner he would treat the order. In fact, the possession of the place was no longer disputed with him, and he himself took up his abode in it the same evening. It is said that one of his officers observed to him, as he was passing through the formidable defences—" It is well, general, that there was some one within to open the gates to us. We should have had more trouble in entering, if the place had been altogether empty."



The Entrance to the Hospital at Valletta.

CONVERSATION VII.

FROM THE TAKING OF MALTA BY THE FRENCH, IN JUNE, 1798, TO THE CAPITULATION TO THE ENGLISH IN 1800.

Mrs. M. Bonaparte forbore to take immediate possession of the palace, and became the guest of a Maltese nobleman, at whose house he awaited a visit from the grand master. Hompesch could not at first prevail on himself to go to him; but being

told that it would be for the interest of the knights to pay that respect to the conqueror, he reluctantly submitted to the humiliating interview. It was cold and formal, and nothing but general conversation took place. Valetta was treated as a conquered city, and the knights had no choice but to submit to the conditions imposed. By these conditions, which were signed on board the Orient, June 12, Malta and its dependencies were given up in full sovereignty to France. An engagement was made to procure some principality for the grand master, and in some cases to grant pensions to the knights, and in other cases to protect their property, and also to preserve the rights of the Maltese inhabitants, and the free exercise of their religion. Thus was Malta revolutionized in six days from the first appearance of the French fleet on the coast, and the impregnable Valetta besieged and taken.

Richard. Let us now see how the people of Malta liked this new order of things.

Mrs. M. No sooner were the French in full possession than the work of pillage began. The spoil of the grand master's palace, that of the churches and public edifices, including the silver vessels of the hospital, together with the standards and trophies of the order, were removed on board ship. Orders were also given for a general press; and the sailors belonging to the island, the grand master's guards and other soldiers, were carried on board, leaving the inhabitants, and more particularly the

families of the impressed men in dismay. The latter, however, were in some measure reconciled by the promise of having monthly allowances paid them during the absence of the husbands and fathers thus taken away from them. It would be unfair to the French not to add that all the Turkish slaves were at the same time liberated from their captivity.

Bonaparte having thus possessed himself, with his usual good fortune, of Malta, and having embarked all that he deemed worth the taking away with him, sailed again on the 19th of June, "little dreaming," as his secretary, M. de Bourrienne remarks in his memoirs, "that he had only taken it for the English;" and what was worse, as he gathered no laurels, so neither did he obtain any fruit from this conquest, for the greater part of the stolen riches of Malta was blown up in the Orient, in the battle of the Nile, about six weeks afterwards. General Vaubois was left governor of the island, with a garrison of 4000 French soldiers.

Mary. But I want to know, mamma, what became of the knights.

Mrs. M. Some, I am sorry to say, joined the invaders: others, in absolute breach of the articles of capitulation, were stripped of every thing, and ordered to leave the island in three days; and it was with difficulty that they could, some of them, obtain the small donation of ten pounds each, out of their own spoils, to bear them on their way. Even

during the brief remainder of their stay in Malta, they were obliged to wear the tri-coloured cockades, and were forbidden to appear with the cross of their order.

Mary. Did the knights still wear the black gown with the white linen cross on the breast ?

Mrs. M. No : that habit had been discontinued for some time, nor do I know when it was left off. At this time they were only distinguished by a small white cross of eight points, suspended from a button-hole on the left breast. But to return to what I was saying : Hompesch, of all the treasures of the order, was only allowed to retain a supposed piece of the true cross, an image of the virgin, and the hand of St. John, of which I have before spoken to you ; but even these were not given up to him till they had been stripped of the precious stones with which the reverence of former times had enriched them.

Richard. It is a pity that the French did not read the history of the conquest of Rhodes. I think they would have been ashamed of behaving so much worse than the Turks.

Mrs. M. It may be some excuse for them that the knights had no longer that high reputation for valour which had made the order so much respected in former ages.

Mary. Nay, dear mamma, pray don't take the part of those French robbers !

Mrs. M. The grand master had the sum of

600,000 livres (25,000*l.* of our money) given him, as a compensation for all he had lost. Half of this sum was kept back to pay his debts at Malta, and with the remainder the poor old man was sent adrift into the world. Accompanied by fourteen of the knights, he embarked for Trieste, where he arrived after a tedious voyage of thirty-nine days. There he resigned his empty dignity, and separated from his companions. He afterwards retired to the south of France, where he spent the rest of his life in obscurity. Of the knights who had joined the French, some attached themselves to the army of Bonaparte, and accompanied him to Egypt, and of these, many lost their lives in the following year under the walls of Acre, and thus moistened with their blood the same sands on which so many of the earlier brothers of the order had fallen. Of those knights who remained true to their vows, some few took refuge in England : but the greater number went to Russia, where they were received with much kindness by the emperor, who gladly accepted the office of grand master of the order, and was invested with it in all the usual forms. He was, indeed, so much delighted with his new dignity, that he issued a command that all foreign governments should be apprised of the fact, and that his own ministers should receive no letters or dispatches addressed to him in which his title of grand master should be omitted. He also directed that the standard of the order should be erected on

one of the bastions of the admiralty at Petersburgh, where I believe that it still continues to wave.

Meanwhile, at Malta the French were extremely busy in making alterations to suit their own systems and notions. All the inscriptions and coats of arms with which the buildings at Valetta had been covered, were thoroughly defaced, and the busts of the knights, and everything else that could be considered as an emblem of nobility, was destroyed. Bodon de Ransijat was placed nominally at the head of the government, but was himself subject in reality to a French commissioner. The Maltese soon found themselves reduced to a state of great misery. The poor, and the aged, who had used to be supported by the charity of the knights, began to feel the loss of their benefactors. The populace looked in vain for the daily distribution of bread to which they had long been accustomed; and above all, the families of the impressed clamoured for the monthly allowances which had been promised to them, but which were never forthcoming. These things fell very heavily on the poor, and the upper classes were also aggrieved by changes which were made in the law and tenures of property, and by a tax which was levied to build barracks for the soldiers. Moreover, the customs of the islanders were ridiculed, and their religion insulted, and before three months had passed, they were one and all become thoroughly dissatisfied with their new masters, and ready to rise up in arms against them.

But what brought matters to a crisis was the taking down the tapestry with which one of the churches at Citta Vecchia was hung, and exposing it to public sale. The people were quite maddened by this desecration of what they considered as sacred. They rose on the French commandant, and killed both him and sixty of his men. They next proceeded to the casal (or village) of Zebug, where the president of the municipality resided, and put him to death. The spirit of revolt spread like wildfire, and in twenty-four hours the whole of Malta and Goza had risen against the French. It was now the turn for these conquerors of half Europe to seek the security of Valetta and her strong walls, and to be besieged by undisciplined troops of peasantry. While the Maltese thus invested Valetta on the land side, a Portuguese squadron of four ships, afterwards joined by a British fleet of fourteen sail, which, however, staid but a short time, appeared before the port and began to co-operate with them. Several of the exiled knights were also desirous to join the besiegers, and embarked for the island. But the Maltese, extraordinary as it must appear to us, were jealous of their coming, and refused to allow them to land.

From the almost impregnable strength of the place, together with the want of sufficient land-forces, the besiegers were not able to attempt a regular assault. It was therefore determined to

convert the siege into a blockade. By sea all access was precluded by the constant vigilance of the fleets; another British squadron under the command of Admiral Lord Keith and Commodore Martin being now stationed with the Portuguese off the harbour; and General Graham acted on shore with the Maltese. Vaubois, however, who was a man of the most determined character, refused resolutely, and very laconically, every summons to surrender; and the blockade, which commenced in the end of August, 1798, did not terminate till the beginning of September, 1800. During the whole of this time the French troops immured in Valetta were not only shut out from all foreign resources, but were kept in ignorance of all that was passing in other parts of the world. Now and then some little vessel would contrive to elude the vigilance of the blockaders, and bring rumours of the past and passing events. But these rumours, instead of satisfying, only tantalized the greedy ears of men thirsting for news of their country and their friends.

Mary. That was very hard to bear. But what did they do for provisions all those two years, if they could get nothing into the town?

Mrs. M. At the commencement of the blockade, there was an abundant store of corn, which, being carefully husbanded, and at last issued at very short allowance, lasted the whole time. The cisterns of water, also, never failed. But every other

kind of food was very scarce, and at the end of a few months almost every eatable thing was consumed except the corn. The French soldiers, who have always a great deal of resource, made little gardens in the angles of the walls and bastions, in which they raised salads and small vegetables, with which they varied the sameness of their food. A few pigs, pigeons, and rabbits were also reared within the city. Amongst their dainties also were *rats*, which were sold at a high price, particularly those which were found in the bakers' shops, and which were the fattest and best. The following were the prices in the month of September, 1799, of some of the procurable articles of food :

Fresh pork . . .	6s. 0d.	} a pound.
Salt meat . . .	2s. 1d.	
Cheese . . .	7s. 3½d.	
Fish from . . .	2s. to 3s. 0d.	
Sugar . . .	18s. 0d.	

A fowl cost from forty-three to fifty shillings, and a rat from a shilling to eighteen pence. Fresh butcher's meat was not to be had at any price, and every dog and cat in the city had long disappeared. This will give you some notion of the privations and sufferings of the inhabitants ; and though it cannot be said that any of them actually died of starvation, since there was, to the last, a sufficiency of bread to maintain life, yet many perished through want of necessary comforts, particularly those who were ill, and in the hospital. Indeed, it is said

that when the siege began there were forty thousand persons in Valetta, but that, what with deaths and desertions, there were only between seven and eight thousand left at its termination. Many of the inhabitants, as soon as the miseries of their condition began to be felt, besought Vaubois to let them quit the city. He readily permitted the poorer sort to do so, but was not so willing to spare the rich. In fact, he felt the want of money even more severely, if possible, than the want of provisions. Bonaparte, when he sailed from Malta, took with him all the money in the public treasury, and left the governor without any means of paying his garrison, except from such supplies as could be raised by pillage or by excessive taxation. From the rest of the island Vaubois was now shut out, and the plunder of the city was, therefore, all he had to depend upon. His first recourse was to the churches, from which he took every thing that could be converted into money. Next came the Monte di Pieta, a sort of public banking-house for the poor. When this supply failed, the property of individuals, and even the goods in the shops, were taken possession of. At last all these resources were exhausted. Neither men nor officers received any regular pay for some months, though Vaubois contrived now and then to distribute some small gratuities to keep up their spirits, and to preserve them from utter despair. Fuel, at all times scarce in Malta, could at length only be

supplied by breaking up the trading vessels in the harbour, which was done without showing any regard to the complaints of the owners.

Richard. Was there much shipping in the harbour?

Mrs. M. There was a considerable quantity of small craft, and also a French line-of-battle ship, Le Guillaume Tell, and two frigates, La Diane and La Justice, the sole remains of the fleet which had encountered Lord Nelson at the battle of the Nile. These ships had been brought to Malta by Admiral Villeneuve a few days before the commencement of the blockade, which of course prevented their getting out. During the progress of the siege, and when the garrison was known to be reduced to straits, a number of store-ships were dispatched from Toulon for its relief; but these were intercepted by the English, and the convoy taken. On this intelligence reaching Malta, it was determined to risk the sending Le Guillaume Tell to France, and to embark in her all the sick, and all other persons whose presence was not necessary for the defence of the city. Orders were therefore given to put her in sailing condition. This was not very easily done; for the fire of the besiegers, which, as it could effect little or nothing against the walls of the city, was chiefly directed towards the harbour, greatly hindered the work. However, she was at last got ready, and took her departure. The commander, Admiral Decrès, chose, as he

hoped, the lucky moment of the absence of the moon to venture forth. All was darkness without, all was silence within, for not a man was allowed to speak, even in a whisper ; and the anchor was heaved with the least possible noise. Yet when the vessel began to move, the rippling of the water roused the attention of the Maltese sentinels, who gave the signal to the English ships ; and she was scarcely out of port before she was vigorously pursued, and taken after a desperate action, in which 207 men were killed, and a great number wounded, including the admiral.

The situation of the besieged now became more and more deplorable. Even the very rats began to fail, and scarcely any living thing remained that could be converted into food, except the horses and mules that were employed in grinding the corn. It was, therefore, resolved that, as soon as all the remaining grain could be reduced into flour, these poor animals should be killed, and their flesh distributed. All hands were in consequence set to work to finish the grinding with all possible expedition.

Mary. O ! Mamma, what a dreadful condition the town must have been in. How did the people bear it ?

Mrs. M. The Maltese inhabitants bore it very ill, but the French submitted to every privation with astonishing courage and cheerfulness. At the commencement, indeed, of the blockade, they were

very impatient of the confinement ; but finding all attempts vain to liberate themselves, or to beat back the Maltese, they reconciled themselves to their situation, and, like wise men, made themselves as happy as they could in their woful condition. To amuse his garrison, and keep up their spirits, Vauboist retained a company of comedians as long as possible ; and when he was at last obliged to dismiss them from inability to pay their salaries, and also from the scarcity of provisions, several amateur actors supplied their places, and the theatre was as well attended as before. Indeed, nothing could exceed the attention which Vauboist showed to his garrison, and his consideration not for their amusements alone, but for their comforts also.

George. What, Mamma, do you put amusements first, and comforts afterwards ! Is not that something like putting the cart before the horse ?

Mrs. M. To us English perhaps it may, but not to a Frenchman. To him amusement is the chief occupation of life ; and as long as he is amused, he can do surprisingly well without comforts ; while, on the contrary, we English can scarcely ever enjoy amusements, unless we are tolerably comfortable into the bargain.

Richard. But, pray, what did Vauboist do to give his poor starving soldiers any thing like comforts ?

Mrs. M. He visited the sick in the hospitals, and had a sort of liquor made that was of great service to them, from malt, of which there was a

sufficient quantity to allow of providing them with a sufficient supply. He also attended particularly to the bake-houses, and examined the bread intended for the soldiers, to see if it was wholesome and good. In short, he was indefatigable in his care for every thing, and consequently, as you may suppose, was greatly beloved by his soldiers, who repaid him by the most willing obedience. No murmurs or discontents were heard; and so little impatient were they to be liberated from their suffering state, that the summons to surrender, which was repeatedly sent from the allied fleet, was always received by the garrison with loud exclamations of "Point de capitulation!" "Vive la République!" Moreover, the rumours that now and then reached Valetta, in spite of the vigilance of the blockading ships, of the successes of the French arms in Italy, gave the soldiers fresh energy to endure their own privations, and zeal to emulate the glory (that leading star) of their countrymen. Occasionally, also, something more solid, though scarcely more acceptable than these rumours, would find its way into Valetta. A boat, laden with fresh provisions and vegetables, would now and then slip into the harbour. During the first year of the blockade, about fifteen vessels, of different sorts, bringing such most acceptable supplies, contrived to get in.

Towards the end of June, 1800, a vessel arrived, which confirmed the rumours previously spread, of the changes which had taken place in France,—of

the dissolution of the government of the Directory, and of the advancement of Bonaparte to the first consulship. This news spread universal joy and animation. The garrison imagined their deliverance to be now at hand. "Our general," they said, "will never neglect the only laurel leaf which he gathered during his Egyptian expedition." Forgetting their starving condition, the people resorted in crowds to the theatre, where they sang, in the most enthusiastic manner, some verses which were composed on the occasion.

Mary. And surely Bonaparte did not neglect them !

Mrs. M. M. Bourrienne relates that Bonaparte had some time before received a letter from the French commissary at Valetta, describing the miserable condition to which the place was reduced, and adding—"Hasten to save us with money and provisions: no time is to be lost." This letter Bonaparte sent to the Moniteur newspaper, but erased everything which was said of the distress of the island; and inserted instead—"His name," meaning his own, "inspires the brave defenders of Malta with fresh courage: we have men and provisions."

Mary. How could he tell such falsehoods ? What could he mean by putting such fibs into the man's letter ?

Mrs. M. Bonaparte never stuck at an untruth when it could serve his purpose; and his object probably was, not to deceive the French, but the

English, into whose hands he knew that the newspaper would come. At this very time the stock of grain in Valetta was so much diminished, that it was thought necessary to limit every man to a pound and a-half of bread daily. The women were allowed a pound a day each, and the children, according to their ages, three-quarters or half a pound. About two months afterwards, Vaubois had an account taken of the quantity of flour that still remained in the store-houses, and it was found that there was only enough to last till the 8th of September. A surrender was therefore become inevitable, and all that the garrison could now do was to make good terms of capitulation. This was no very difficult task : the English have never been reckoned hard bargainers ; and on this occasion the bravery of the besieged merited more than the usual generosity at their hands. However, before the offer was made to give up the place, Vaubois and Villeneuve were desirous to save, if possible, the two frigates that yet remained in the harbour, by sending them to sea. They were accordingly equipped, and immediately set sail. La Justice, I believe, reached France ; but Villeneuve, two days after, had the mortification of seeing La Diane a captive, and in the midst of the British squadron.

Early on the 3d of September, Vaubois wrote to General Pigot, the English commander, to demand a capitulation ; and at eleven o'clock on the same day, General Graham and Commodore

Martin arrived at Valetta, to confer on the terms. The treaty was concluded the same evening, and the terms granted were exceedingly favourable to the garrison.

Richard. I am glad of that; for though I cannot like the men that took possession of Malta in so shameful a way, yet I can't help almost forgiving them, in consideration of their having defended it so resolutely during those two tedious, wearisome years.

Mrs. M. It was of course agreed, on the part of the French, to give up the town to the English, who on their part covenanted that the French should immediately be conveyed to France, with all their effects. This capitulation was formally announced the next morning; and in the afternoon two of the English frigates and a few smaller vessels entered the harbour, and the troops took possession of Floriana and the other forts. The French had so much dreaded the animosity of the Maltese, that they had particularly stipulated that none of them should be allowed to enter the city till they themselves should be embarked and out of sight of the port.

Mary. O! how happy these poor people must have been when they got to their own country, and could have wholesome food to eat, and green fields to walk in, after living so long on bread and water, and seeing nothing but sea and stone walls!

George. Do you know, Mamma, what became of those two fine fellows, Vanbois and Villeneuve?

Mrs. M. Vaubois continued to serve in the French army with much distinction till the restoration of the Bourbons. He then joined, or, as is commonly said, gave in his adhesion to Louis XVIII., and died respected and honoured. He was a man of good birth, and at the epoch of the revolution was a captain of artillery. The career of Villeneuve was less happy. He commanded the French fleet in the battle of Trafalgar, in October, 1805. His ship, the Bucentaur, was destroyed, and he was taken prisoner and brought to England. In the following year he was permitted to return to France on his parole, and he died, I have been told, by his own hand.

Richard. Poor man! It would have been better for him to have died with Nelson.

Mrs. M. Malta was now come into the entire possession of the English, whom the Maltese regarded not as conquerors, but as friends and deliverers. The laws and regulations introduced by the French were abolished, and every thing, at least every thing which related to the Maltese, restored as much as possible to its former state. No sooner, however, were the English established in the island, than the Emperor Paul asserted his claim to it in virtue of his right as grand master. His claim not being allowed, he began immediately to breathe defiance and vengeance, and laid an embargo on all British vessels in the Russian ports, and harassed and maltreated the British subjects

in his dominions. But his assassination in March, 1801, put an end to these vexations, and his son, the Emperor Alexander, though he continued to afford his protection to those of the knights who had sought an asylum in Russia, did not concern himself any further in their affairs, nor show any inclination to prosecute the claim which his father had asserted on Malta. As protector of the order, he, however, issued a proclamation, appointing one of his generals to act as lieutenant of the grand master, and declaring Petersburgh to be the chief seat of the order till circumstances should permit the election of a grand master according to the ancient forms and statutes.

In the treaty of Amiens, in 1802, there were no fewer than eleven articles relating exclusively to Malta. The chief purport of these articles was, that Malta and its dependencies should be restored to the Knights of St. John, to be held by them, in most respects, as before the capture by France, and that a new grand master should be elected. It was stipulated that, in case of war between the Christian states, the order should remain strictly neutral, and that the ports should be open to all nations alike. To make the knights wholly independent of both England and France, it was provided that no subject of either power should enter the order, and that there should be neither a French nor an English language, but that a Maltese language should be established instead, and that the

forts should be intrusted to a Neapolitan garrison, till such time as the order itself should have raised a sufficient force to defend them. These conditions may seem, perhaps, on the surface to be very impartial. No reasonable doubt, however, can be entertained but that the English negotiators were completely outwitted when they gave their consent to them. The knights, in their impoverished state, would never have been able, even if restored to their island, to resist either the force or the influence which France would undoubtedly use to regain it. The conviction that this would be the case became in England every day stronger and stronger, as the distrust increased of Bonaparte's disposition to maintain the peace in good faith. The actual surrender of the island was therefore delayed from time to time, till the war broke out again in 1803. The Maltese people, though I am afraid that *their* inclinations were not much attended to, were very well satisfied with being thus retained as a dependence on England. While the treaty was pending, they had warmly remonstrated on the injustice of disposing of themselves, their rights, and privileges, without their consent, or even previous knowledge; and they declared, that so far from giving themselves up to the knights, who, as they said, had basely sold them to France, they would massacre every one of them who should dare to set foot in the island. Two deputations of Maltese were sent to England, announcing these

resolutions to the English ministers, but could not obtain any positive answer.

In the interval which preceded the re-commencement of hostilities, Bonaparte complained of nothing so loudly as the breach of treaty of the English government in refusing or delaying the evacuation of Malta. England, on her side, pleaded various aggressions of France as the reason for not surrendering it. Various expedients were proposed. One was that the English should keep it for ten years, and then resign it as a free and independent state to the inhabitants: another plan was, that some settlement should be found elsewhere for the knights; and another, that Elba, or some other island in the Mediterranean, should be given up to France in lieu of it as a naval dépôt. But Napoleon would have Malta, and nothing but Malta; and he told Lord Whitworth, the English ambassador, that he had rather give up to England the Fauxbourg St. Antoine at Paris than that she should have Malta. A few days afterwards, the ambassador was informed that he might quit Paris. War was declared May 18th, 1803; and on the 25th, a French general marched on Hanover, and took possession of that town and duchy, professing to regard them as pledges for the recovery of Malta. We have still continued, however, in uninterrupted possession of the island; and our right to it was expressly recognized and confirmed by the peace of Paris in 1814.

George. And I hope that all things have prospered the better in the little island, for that reason.

Mrs. M. Since Malta has been subject to England, it has been freed from the calamities of war and of civil dissension. Yet I am sorry to say that it has been afflicted by another, and, if possible, a still greater calamity; I mean the plague. Notwithstanding every precaution, the island suffers occasionally from this dreadful malady, and one of its severest visitations took place in 1813. Early in May, a shoemaker of Valetta received a bale of leather from the Levant. It is supposed that this bale brought the infection. Soon after it had been opened, the man's whole family sickened, one after another, and died. Soon afterwards, the disorder appeared in various parts of the town. The alarm became extreme. The churches were shut, all amusements ceased, and many of the higher ranks hastily fled to the other parts of the island: but instead of thus escaping the plague, they only carried it with them, and spread it among the villages.

When the disease first made its appearance, the victims commonly lingered some days. But as its ravages extended, so also the rapidity increased with which its poison operated; and persons, apparently in good health when they left their dwellings, would catch the infection in the street and drop lifeless soon afterwards. No person was now per-

mitted to go into the streets without a passport from the Board of Health; and the furniture and clothes belonging to those who died were ordered to be burnt. These precautions, as long as they were rigidly attended to, had the effect of abating the disorder; but the observance of them relaxing, it broke out with redoubled violence. The Lazaretto was insufficient to contain the sick, and temporary hospitals were erected outside the town. The Maltese physicians were not only manifestly ignorant of any method of cure, but were also themselves so much afraid of infection, that when they visited a patient they would stand at the farthest possible distance, and examine him through an opera glass. Towards the middle of summer, the number that died daily, according to the reports of the Board of Health, was from fifty to seventy-five: but it is supposed that the actual number was much greater; for the people, in dread of being taken to the plague-hospitals, concealed their dead, and many were buried privately in their houses and gardens. The difficulty now was to procure persons to perform the last offices; and a few daring Greeks, clad in leather saturated with oil, proffered their services. But these did not suffice for the dreadful necessities of the case; and some French and Italian prisoners of war were prevailed on by handsome rewards, and the promise of liberty, to give their assistance. These people not only helped to bury the dead, but were

also employed to sweep the streets, and to whitewash the infected houses, and many of them fell victims to their dangerous office.

Richard. You said that the Greeks wore oiled leather : what was that for ?

Mrs. M. It was worn as a precaution against infection ; and I understand that it is one of the most effectual which has yet been discovered.

Mary. Then I wonder the Maltese did not use it !

Mrs. M. They seem to have been distracted by the greatness of the calamity ; and losing all faith in their own physicians, and in the usual remedies, they resorted to some doctors from Smyrna. But these, though professing themselves to be plague-doctors, and of high repute in their own country, could give the suffering Maltese no better consolation than the assurance that they had often known the plague still more violent at Smyrna. The miseries of famine were added to those of disease. All foreign trade was at a stand ; and the island, as you know, produces but little food for its numerous population. At last the disease abated, and by the end of December had entirely disappeared in Valetta, and lingered only a short time longer in the villages. It was chiefly confined to the lower classes. The richer people shut themselves up in their houses, leading the life of prisoners, and their only recreation was to go to the terraces on the tops of their houses, and if they were too far

from each other to converse, to have the comfort of at least looking at their friends.

Mary. Ah, Mamma, and even that must have been a great comfort !

Richard. And what became of the English during the plague ? How did they escape ?

Mrs. M. It is remarkable that, while the Maltese were dying all around them, only twelve of our countrymen fell victims to the disorder. This, perhaps, under Providence, is partly to be attributed to the more cleanly habits of the English, and to the precautions taken by the governor, who had the soldiers rubbed daily with oil, and supplied them liberally with tobacco, the fumes of which are supposed to be a preservative from infection.

Richard. And now I suppose you have come to the end of the history of Malta ; and I hope that the inhabitants, after all their various changes, are satisfied with their present masters the English.

Mrs. M. I sincerely hope they are so. But of this I can only judge from what I have heard said by some persons who have been resident in the island ; and these, at least all whom I have known, agree in speaking well of the natives, and of their civility and attention to the English, and of their apparently contented and happy condition. They are governed by their own laws, and have the free exercise of their religion, and enjoy an unrestrained intercourse with the English authorities, and an

admission into civil offices, from which they were excluded under the government of the Knights. The trial by jury was introduced amongst them in 1829.

Mary. And now, Mamma, do pray tell us what has become of the Knights since they were turned out of house and home.

Mrs. M. On their expulsion from Malta, they took refuge, some in England, and some in Russia, and others elsewhere. After the resignation of Hompesch, and the death of Paul, they continued for some time without even a nominal chief, and indeed were so scattered about that a council could not be assembled to elect one. In 1802, Sir Alexander Ball, on the part of the British, and a general of Bonaparte's, on the part of the French government, were sent to Malta as commissioners, to elect a new grand master, and to establish a Maltese language, according to the provisions of the treaty of Amiens. But these commissioners did nothing. It had been among the stipulations of the treaty, that a noble birth, or the proof of it, should not be required from the natives of Malta on their admission into this their own language so established. The Emperor Alexander, of Russia, as Protector of the order, entered a protest against any such democratical relaxation of its original rule, and before this matter could be adjusted, hostilities broke out again. After a time, some of the older and more leading members of the brother-

hood applied to the Pope Pius VII. to appoint them a grand master, and he accordingly, in 1805, nominated an Italian knight, named Tomosi. At present there is no grand master, and all the affairs of the order, such as they are, are regulated by a permanent chapter, of which, since the general peace, various sittings have been held at Paris, and some, of late, as I have been told, at Ferrara. This chapter is formed of representatives from the chapters of the different languages, and was appointed to remain in commission till the order should again obtain a house of its own. As no such house has yet been obtained, I therefore suppose that it is in commission still. At least it was so in 1823, when some zealous friends of the Knights of St. John proposed to the Greeks (whose affairs began about that time to interest the rest of Europe) to give up to the order the two small islands of Sapienza and Cabressa, on the coast of the Morea, in the hope that this cession might eventually lead to their re-establishment in their ancient seat at Rhodes, which it was intended to reconquer for them from the Turks.

This scheme, however, fell to the ground in its first stage. It was calculated that a sum of 640,000*l.* would be necessary to carry it into effect, and this sum, as we may well imagine, could not be raised.

George. Are there any Knights of Malta made now? or are there none left but the remains of the old set?

Mrs. M. I believe that many new members, some of them persons of rank and wealth, have been, since the peace, enrolled in the order. I have also seen it asserted * that the Maltese cross used to be sold at one time, like the English baronetcies at their first institution, for a stipulated sum. Be that, however, as it may, the knights, though still calling themselves the Brotherhood of St. John of Jerusalem, have been compelled, by change of circumstances, to submit to many changes in their rules. They, however, still endeavour to preserve the memory of their ancient greatness, by keeping up, as much as they can, their ancient forms and ceremonies.

George. And have they any revenues still left with which to maintain themselves?

Mrs. M. They still hold their appointments in Russia, which, however, are by no means considerable, and also retain some commanderies in Spain. But these last, as I have been informed by a Spanish gentleman, whose brother possessed one of them, are always conferred on Spanish knights, according to the king's pleasure, and are not at the disposal of the general chapter.

Mary. You have often mentioned commanderies, but I don't think you have ever told us what they are.

Mrs. M. They are the benefices, or estates, which were given or left to the order, and assigned

* James's Travels in Russia.

to the several knights ; and the name is derived from the word *commendamus*, which signifies to intrust, a word used in the form of institution.

By way of conclusion to this little history, I will now give you a short account of a visit made to the island by Sir Philip Skippon, in the year 1664.* Sir Philip was then travelling in company with two friends, whose names have since become very eminent—Mr. Ray the naturalist, and Mr. Willughby of Middleton, the author of the ‘History of Birds.’ He landed in Malta May 12, having crossed from Sicily in about six or seven hours. At this time Nicholas Cottoner was grand master, whom Sir Philip thus describes :—“This gentleman is ancient, and of mean stature : his habit was a gown with sleeves, something like our lawyers’, whereon was a cross on the left shoulder, and on his breast he wore another cross. It being the custom for strangers to give him a visit, we went to his palace, and passed through a hall, where were pictures of all the famous sea-fights the Maltese knights have been masters in. At the upper end was a canopy and chair of state. Then we came through two or three rooms to the grand master, who spake very kindly to us.

“The knights being divided into several nations —every nation hath its albergo, or hall, where they dine and sup—we went to that belonging to the French, which is a fine building, having a large

* Churchill’s Collection of Voyages, vol. vi.

hall, buttery, &c. There is an albergo designed for the English, but at present there is nothing besides a void space of ground walled in, which the order will not suffer should be put to any use, hoping that the English nation may turn Roman Catholic, and have occasion for it." He adds, that they continued to nominate one of their order as prior of England. Each nation had its prior or superior, one of the oldest amongst them, and who was distinguished by the title of grand cross. There were at this time about 800 knights in Malta: the rest were absent, either in their own several countries, or with the galleys. There were seven galleys belonging to the order, and in each 500 men. Several of the knights had also leave to send forth ships against the Turks; and our author, while he was there, saw two vessels brought in as prizes, after two days' fight.

Of Valetta, after describing its situation, he says : "The streets, not yet paved, are eight in length, and twelve cross streets, all running in straight lines; but the rock they are built on makes them uneven, there being many ascents and descents. Yet the two chief streets are indifferently even; in one of which the chief merchants and citizens live, and in the other, nigh the palace, many knights dwell. There were said to be 1891 houses, and 10,744 inhabitants. The houses are generally low built, and all flat roofed. The roofs have a firm plaster, whereon they sleep in the summer nights in the

open air, without prejudice, the air being very clear; and though it is the most southern part of Christendom, yet here is usually a fresh and gentle breath of wind that tempers the heat, people living to a good old age.

"The market-place is near, having a piazza, rounded with a portico, full of stalls, all built of stone, and great store of provisions here every day of all sorts, and at a reasonable rate, though most of it is brought from Sicily. They had pretty store of strawberries at this time, and good, little, fresh cheeses, like curds made of sheep's milk.

"The infirmario, or hospital, is a handsome building, where great care is taken of all sick persons, both the knights and the inhabitants, none being permitted to lie sick in their own houses, except the great master and the grand crosses. Every sick person hath two beds for change when there is need, and they are served after this manner by the knights, who attend in their turns. One morning we saw two slaves bring a bier into the middle of the hospital room, whereon stood the several dishes of meat. Then a knight read a scroll, wherein the physician had ordered what each patient should have; and officers are ready to dish it out accordingly in silver plates, which are delivered into the hands of the knights that wait, who immediately carry it to the sick persons' beds, which are known by numbers written on the wall. Wounded persons have chambers apart, two in each

room: every sick person hath a little closet, where he may dress and undress himself."

Sir Philip further gives us an account of the slaves, of whom he says there were 2000, including those who were out with the galleys. About 300 were servants to private persons. Some were tailors and shoemakers, and carried on different trades; but all wore an iron ring or footlock to prevent their escaping, and were lodged at night in the slaves' prison. Jews, as well as Moors and Turks, were made slaves, and were publicly sold in the market. The price of a stout slave, if he were of inferior rank, was from 150 to 200 Maltese crowns. The Jews were distinguished from the rest by a little piece of yellow cloth on their hats and caps. Sir Philip Skippon saw a rich Jew, who had been taken about a year before, sold in the market for 400 crowns. Our traveller made also an excursion into the interior of the island; but as that is probably little changed now from what it was then, I do not know that there is anything in his account of it particularly worth notice. He visited the grand master's country-house at Boschetto, and speaks of the gardens as full of olive and orange trees, and having a straight walk through the middle, between pillars encircled by vines, which formed a long arbour in summer. This, with fountains and "sports of water," must have made this spot a delightful retreat in that hot and dry climate and country. He also speaks of a *vivarium* for wild

animals, but says that it contained nothing remarkable. He observes that the country people "live neatly, having orange gardens, &c.," and that the Maltese reckoned the hours of the day by twelve and twelve, as we do, and not like the Italians, who reckon the twenty-four all round.

HISTORY OF POLAND.

HISTORY OF POLAND.

CONVERSATION I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF POLAND.

Richard. And now, Mamma, will you give us another history ; the history of the Poles, if you please ?

Mary. And why that above all others : is it so very entertaining ?

Richard. I don't know about that, but one hears so much about the poor Poles ; and every body is so sorry for them, that I should like to know something about them.

Mary. And why is everybody so sorry for them ?

Mrs. Markham. Because we are naturally sorry for the unfortunate ; and especially sorry to see any independent country made a spoil to its neighbours. The whole of the Polish territory, with an exception not now worth mentioning, has been divided between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and the people have lost their place among the nations of Europe. I shall be very glad to give you what account I can of the history of this unfortunate

country, and, although my little Mary will not, I fear, find it so entertaining as I would wish it to be, yet it is worth knowing.

George. Before you begin, we will, if you please, get the map, and look at it. Ah! here it is. Poland has not lost its place in the map book, whatever it may have done among nations.

Mrs. M. The kingdom, or as the Poles chose to call it, the republic, of Poland was originally an inconsiderable territory, comprising only the two divisions of greater and lesser Poland. It was afterwards enlarged by the conquest of Pomerania, Prussia, and other neighbouring provinces, and in the fourteenth century by the annexation of the great duchy of Lithuania. The whole, in its full extent, was about seven hundred miles long, and six hundred and eighty broad. This at least is what it appears to be in the map. It was a country so open to invaders, that its frontier was continually varying, either as its neighbours made encroachments on Poland, or as the Poles made reprisals on their neighbours. Indeed, excepting on the side of the Baltic sea, and on the south-west, where the Carpathian mountains divide it from Hungary, Poland has no natural boundaries. The country is described as very level, and to consist chiefly in vast forests, and in large plains fertile in corn. Indeed, the quantity of corn grown in Poland is so great, that it has been called the granary of the north.

Mary. Are there any wild beasts in these forests?

Mrs. M. Not lions and tigers, and what we usually call wild beasts: but there are elks, and buffaloes, and wolves, and wild-boars, and deer, and other animals, that furnish perpetual employment to the hunters. I am told that in the Sclavonic language, from which is derived the present Polish, the word Pole or Poln, or Polska, signifies a plain or open country, a sort of country adapted for hunting. In the Polish forests are also to be found, if not recently extirpated, wild horses and wild asses.

Richard. You said, Mamma, that Poland was a kingdom, and yet a republic. How can that be?

Mrs. M. It was a kingdom, because there was a king, or at least a person called by that name, who went through the ceremony of a coronation. But he was an elected king, and had no real authority: so that the government was practically a republic, or rather an oligarchy, the power being substantially in the hands of the nobles. The lower orders had no weight whatever in the state.

George. Was there any rule about choosing the king?

Mrs. M. In the early times, though the nobles claimed the privilege of electing whom they pleased, they yet commonly selected one of the late king's sons, or if he had none, one of his family. But in later times they not only excluded

the members of the royal family, but often chose foreigners.

George. Why, to be sure, it did not much signify who or what he was, since he was only a king for show.

Mrs. M. The most respectable part of the Polish government was the senate, a body composed of all the bishops, and of a select body of nobles appointed by the king, and retaining their office for life. At the head of this senate was the archbishop of Gnesna, the primate, whose person and office were invested with very great and extraordinary privileges, and who was also the head or sovereign of the state during all interregnumas, or vacancies of the throne, between the death of one king and the election of another. Sixteen of the senators were privy counsellors, and four of these privy counsellors were required to reside at court, as inspectors of the king's conduct, and guardians of the public liberty.

Richard. You said that the king had no power; but surely the choosing the senators would give him some.

Mrs. M. The king was in fact the servant of the nobles, rather than their master. At his coronation he was made to swear to a contract called, the *Pacta Conventa*. These *pacta* contained many strict conditions; but I shall enumerate only a few. The first is, that the king shall not encroach on the liberties of the people. It is further con-

ditioned, that he shall not marry but with the consent of the senate. He may himself be a foreigner, but he must not place a foreigner in any office either civil or military. Even the king's children were not allowed to hold any post of trust or profit, lest it should lead to attempts to make the crown hereditary. Besides the senate, which was a permanent body, Poland had a *diet*, or great assembly of the states. The diet was composed of the king, the senate, including of course the bishops, and of deputies sent from the nobles of the palatinates, or provinces, into which the country was divided. The number of these palatinates is stated at thirty-two: but several of them were lost in some of the wars with the neighbouring states. The diet consisted of about four hundred persons in all. The general rule was that it should be assembled once every two years.

Richard. And what had the diet to do when it did assemble?

Mrs. M. It was supposed to assemble for the sake of regulating all the more important affairs of the state, as, for example, to consider of declaring war, or concluding peace, to make new laws, or to levy new taxes: but it very frequently dispersed without doing anything. One remarkable part of the constitution of the diet was, that in all state matters of the greatest importance, any one member had a power, by what was called the *liberum veto*, to stop the proceedings, and even to dissolve

the assembly. This power, which in effect required the unanimity of four hundred persons on matters vehemently affecting their passions and interests, was a peculiar feature in the government of this country, and has had the effect of palsying all efforts for its improvement. The diets never lasted more than six weeks, let the subjects under discussion be ever so important. On common occasions the diet met at Warsaw, but every third turn at Grodno, for the convenience of the Lithuanians. These ordinary diets, which were thus composed, were called the *comitia togata*. But the diets which assembled for the election of a king comprehended the whole body of the nobles, or all of them who chose to come, and these diets had the title of the *comitia paludata*. The place of assembly on these occasions was in a large field or plain near Warsaw, where all who attended came on horseback, and armed as for battle.

Richard. If the diet, which I suppose was a sort of parliament, met so seldom, and did so little when it did meet, how was the government of the country carried on?

Mrs. M. The senate, I have already said, was the chief practical organ or engine of the general affairs of the state. The internal government of each province or palatinate was vested chiefly in their respective *palatines* or governors, in the *castellans*, and the *starosts*. The *castellans* were the lieutenants or deputies of the *palatines*, and com-

manded a portion of the troops of their respective districts, when they were called out. The *starosts* were properly and constitutionally old military officers who had certain lands assigned them as a reward for their services, and who acted in their several districts (some of them with a very considerable jurisdiction) as a sort of justices of the peace. These appointments, however, soon came to be bestowed rather by court favour, than according to services. There were also civil tribunals, and judges, and what were termed courts of justice: but from all I can find out, law and justice did not thrive well in this country, where every noble's will was the law of his own land, and where the sword was much more in use than the pen. Another important part of the Polish constitution were the *pospolite*, or militia, which might be summoned by the king, but could not be kept in arms above six weeks at a time, nor obliged to go more than about three leagues beyond the limits of Poland. This body was composed entirely of gentry or nobles, and, though very brave, was very disorderly; for all who composed it being of equal rank, all wanted to command, and none liked to obey. And for this reason, though the Poles are said to be individually as fine soldiers as any in the world, the Polish army has usually been lower than any other in the points of discipline, military knowledge, and economy. Whenever the *pospolite* was assembled, the courts of justice were shut, and all causes and trials suspended.

Mary. You speak, Mamma, so much of the nobles, that one would almost suppose that there was nobody else in Poland besides.

Mrs. M. The population of Poland was divided into three classes besides the clergy. There were the nobles, the burghers, and the peasants. The nobles had the whole government in their hands: they paid no taxes, and they alone were allowed to possess landed property; though here, indeed, we must except the burghers of some few towns, who enjoyed that privilege. As for the peasants, they were usually serfs, or slaves, and the property of the owners of the soil, who might treat them as ill as they pleased, and had even the power over them of life and death; and this so absolutely, that if one noble killed a peasant belonging to another, his only punishment was to give a peasant of his own in return.

Mary. Poor creatures! how miserable they must have been!

Mrs. M. So indeed we must be inclined to think, and yet all travellers have told us that in spite of this their oppressed state, they were a cheerful and contented race, satisfied with their condition, as knowing no other, and generally attached and faithful to their owners, whom they regarded as a superior order of beings, much in the way in which a dog loves his master.

Richard. But are travellers always able to judge of these things?

Mrs. M. Probably not always, and we tarry at-

home travellers are often led into great mistakes. Content or discontent is always a matter much more of the mind than of circumstances. All writers agree, however, that though Poland has probably the greatest advantages of all countries in the world for the production of corn, and exports a large quantity, yet the usual fare of the Polish labourer is exceedingly mean. I have been told that buck-wheat forms a considerable part of their sustenance ; and that their clothing also is in general of the coarsest quality that can be imagined. In summer they are dressed in a sort of cloth, which looks as if it were made of packthread, and in winter in sheep-skins, with the wool inwards ; and the women's dress is of the same material as the men's. Their huts are without furniture, and even without beds, and they lie on straw spread on the floor. A German gentleman once told me that he had on some occasion travelled in company with a party of Polish peasants, who had been sent to Odessa to sell corn for their masters, and were returning with the money, their horses, and their empty sacks. They were very dirty, but not otherwise ill clad, and uncouth to the last degree ; but good-natured and harmless. They had nothing to eat during the whole journey but the coarsest flour, which they mixed with a little cold water, and made into a sort of porridge. At night they bivouacked with their horses in the open air, and then they indulged themselves with a grand regale,

mixing their porridge with hot water instead of with cold. And these poor people seemed quite contented with their hard fare, and were always cheerful.

George. And the nobles of Poland: what sort of people were they ?

Mrs. M. They were a fine, handsome, manly race, full of impetuosity, inconsistency, and pride ; but ardent, brave, and devoid of deceit and malice. They were extremely vain, and fond of dress and conviviality. It used to be their delight to fill their large and scantily-furnished houses with social guests, each of whom brought his own knife and spoon, and also, if he lodged in the house, his own bedding.

Richard. But had all the nobles large houses ?

Mrs. M. In so numerous a class (for, as all the sons of nobles were of equal rank, it was very numerous), there must of course have been a great inequality of fortune, and some were so poor as to be obliged to become the servants of those who were richer.

George. Why didn't they go to sea, or keep shops, or do anything, rather than go to service ?

Mrs. M. Unluckily there was no navy: and by one of their laws, a nobleman who engaged in trade was degraded from his rank ; but in becoming a servant, he was not thought to undergo any degradation, and lost none of the rights and privileges of his birth. While he waited on his master, his own serf, if he

had one, waited on him, and he also retained his seat in the Diet. I have heard of an English gentleman who was at Warsaw, being much surprised at seeing his Polish valet, or coachman, I forget which, appear before him in full dress, and with a sword by his side, and desire to be excused from attendance on him for that day, as he was going to vote at the election of the king. And this story, as is so often the case, puts me in mind of another. The Poles, as I have told you, are said to be a proud race, and their pride was fostered by their elective form of government, which held out to every free-born Pole the possibility of his being made king. "Every noble is born for the throne" is a national proverb which was often in their mouths and oftener in their thoughts. I was once told of a very poor noble, who had contrived by great parsimony in other things to maintain a band of music, and who, on being advised by a friend to dismiss his musicians, and to feed and clothe himself a little better, drew himself up, and haughtily replied, "Suppose I should be elected king to-morrow; what shall I do for a band of music?"

Richard. But still, though the Poles could neither be sailors nor tradesmen, there was no law, I suppose, against their applying to learning.

Mrs. M. The genius of the people does not, as far as I can learn, dispose them to literature. They are excellent horsemen, elegant dancers, and remarkably graceful and captivating in their air, and

carriage, and manners ; but they are, generally speaking, no great readers. They have, nevertheless, a great facility in acquiring languages, and almost every gentleman can speak two or three with facility.

Richard. And, pray, what is the language of the country ?

Mrs. M. It is a dialect of the Selavonic ; but Latin is also spoken almost as much as Polish, and if not always correctly, yet at least very fluently, and by those who can neither write nor read. French is also much used by persons of rank, who consider, I am told, the speaking Latin as a vulgarism. With regard to commerce, Poland has but little, and few manufactures, and those only the commonest and the most domestic ; for though the country produces almost all that is requisite for the wants of man, the inhabitants have little genius for making the most of these gifts of nature. Almost all commodities are exported unwrought, and, in exchange for these, and especially for corn, which is the principal export, Poland receives the manufactured goods of other more industrious and more ingenious nations. The little trade which there is, is also chiefly confined to the city of Dantzig ; and a great proportion of it is in the hands of the Jews, who possess, or at least, as you know, have the character of possessing, as a people, that sort of long-headedness and capacity for business, in which the Poles are deficient. The Jews, moreover, and of this I

shall have to speak further hereafter, have always, when driven from other countries, found a refuge in Poland, and have arrived there at a degree of consideration and respectability unknown to them elsewhere.

Richard. Of what religion, pray, are the Poles?

Mrs. M. The Roman Catholic was considered as the national church, and the king was always required to be of it; but all other professions of Christianity are tolerated, and there are many Protestants, and many who profess the tenets of the Greek Church.

George. I think I have found out the reason why the government of Poland remained, as you said, unchanged, while others were improving. The Poles, as they had no commerce, did not grow richer, and having no literature, did not grow wiser, and therefore naturally went on and on without mending.

Mrs. M. And yet as they were brave and warlike, they retained their place in the scale of nations as long as they retained their spirit of independence, honour, and integrity. Their fall has been chiefly owing to their own corruption, and to their readiness to receive foreign bribes.

Richard. And now, Mamma, if you please, we are ready for the history.

Mrs. M. But the history is not quite ready for you. I will give you a table, however, of the sovereigns of Poland, which you will find it useful to

refer to in the course of our history. You must not be startled at some of the strange-looking names which it contains.

TABLE OF THE POLISH SOVEREIGNS.

A.D.

550. Lechus I., first Duke.

Viscimir.

Cracus I. was succeeded by his sons,

Cracus II., murdered,

Lechus II., deposed. Lechus II. was succeeded by his sister, Vanda.

750. Premislaus, a native Pole.

754. Lechus III.

804. Lechus IV.

Popiel I. } descendants of Lechus III.

Popiel II. }

With whom terminated the first class of the Dukes of Poland.

Second Class of Dukes, or Piasts, or line of Piastus.

830. Piastus, a peasant.

Ziemovitus.

892. Lechus V.

921. Zienomislaus.

962. Mieczlaus I., introduced Christianity.

Kings of Poland.

999. Boleslaus I., the Great, surnamed Chroby, or *the Terrible*.

1025. Mieczlaus II.

1034. Casimir I.

1058. Boleslaus II., who was deprived of the title of King. To him succeeded, as

Dukes of Poland,

1082. Uladislaus I.

1102. Boleslaus III.

A.D.

1139. Uladislaus II.
 1146. Boleslaus IV.
 1174. Mieczlaus III.
 1178. Casimir II., surnamed *the Just*, } sons of Boleslaus III.
 1194. Lechus VI., son of Casimir.
 1228. Boleslaus V.
 1279. Lechus VII.
 1290. Henry. After whose death the title of Kings of Poland
 was resumed, and first in
 1295, by Premislaus II.
 1300. Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia.
 1305. Uladislaus III., surnamed Locticus, or *the Short*.
 1333. Casimir III., surnamed *the Great*.
 1370. Lewis, King of Hungary, who died in 1382. In him ter-
 minated the race of the Piasts, who had reigned over
 Poland 558 years.

The race of Jagello.

1386. Jagello, Duke of Lithuania, was elected King of Poland.
 He took the name of Uladislaus IV. He married He-
 dwiga, daughter of the late King Lewis.
 1435. Uladislaus V. } sons of Jagello.
 1445. Casimir IV.
 1492. John I. (Albert,) } sons of Casimir.
 1501. Alexander.
 1506. Sigismund I.
 1548. Sigismund II., surnamed Augustus, son of Sigismund I. ;
 died in 1572. In him ended the race of Jagello.
 1574. Henry II. (of Valois.)
 1576. Stephen Battori.

Kings of the House of Vasa.

1586. Sigismund III., Prince of Sweden, nephew of Sigismund
 Augustus.
 1632. Uladislaus VI. } sons of Sigismund III.
 1648. John II. (Casimir,) John Casimir resigned the Crown in 1668.
 1668. Michael (a native Pole).
 1674. John III. (Sobieski).

A.D.

1696. Frederick Augustus I., Elector of Saxony; deposed by Charles XII. of Sweden in 1704.
1704. Stanislaus I. (Leczinski); expelled in 1713.
1713. Frederick Augustus restored.
1733. Frederick Augustus II.
1764. Stanislaus II. (Poniatowski), the last King of Poland.
1772. First Partition of Poland.
1793. Second Partition.
1795. Third Partition.
1807. Formation of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.
1815. Treaty of Vienna. The Emperor Alexander made King of Poland, and grants a Constitution.
1830. } The late Revolution.
1832. }

CONVERSATION II.

THE FIRST DUKES, TO THE ACCESSION OF PIASTUS.

[Years after Christ, 550—830.]

Mrs. M. POLAND is one of the few countries which are scarcely possessed of any very early traditions. It appears that either it had none of those bards or minstrels whom almost every other nation has had as its chroniclers, or that their traditional songs or records have been lost and forgotten, amidst the wars and the turbulence in which the people have been constantly involved.

The Polish writers, however, rather than have no early history at all, have helped out their scanty materials very freely with fable. It is impossible now to separate what is true from what is fictitious in the relations they give us, and therefore many modern writers pass over this period of uncertainty altogether, and begin their accounts with the introduction of Christianity into Poland, in the tenth century. I shall attempt, however, to steer briefly through the preceding ages as well as I can, and without vouching for the truth of all I shall say.

Poland was known to the Romans by the name of Sarmatia, a general name given by them to the unexplored tract between the Vistula and the Volga.

The first duke of Poland is said to have been Lechus or Lecht, and to have lived about the year 550. His successor was named Viscimir, after whose death the government was placed in the hands of twelve vaivodes or palatines, and the country divided into the same number of provinces. The people, however, soon became dissatisfied with this change, and again elected a duke. This, their third duke, was Cracus, who is said to have founded the city of Cracow, anciently the capital of Poland. Cracus left two sons, of whom the eldest, Cracus II., was secretly murdered by his brother, Lechus II., who occupied for a time the ducal seat, but was deposed after the murder was discovered. The story of his sister Vanda, or Wenda, who succeeded him, though certainly not written by a Virgil, may yet remind us of that of Queen Dido, and was quite as romantic.

This princess, we are told, was wise as well as beautiful, and the country was very happy under her rule : when, in an evil hour, Rithogar, or Rüdiger, a German prince, sent to demand her in marriage, and enforced his suit with an intimation that if his addresses were rejected, he should declare war against her. Vanda was not to be so won. She rejected the lover and prepared for the consequences. The two armies met, but before any blow was struck, Vanda, who appeared at the head of her troops, addressed so eloquent an harangue to her enemies, as to completely disarm them. Astonished at her

wisdom and her beauty, they threw down their weapons, and worshipped her as a divinity ; while the unhappy lover, in a paroxysm of despair, plunged his sword into his heart, and died on the spot.

Richard. And this, I suppose, is one of the things that you don't expect us to believe ?

Mrs. M. I have not yet got to the end of the story. The noble appearance of the prince as he was drawing his sword, and the devotedness of the sacrifice he had made of himself, touched Vanda with sorrow and remorse. She repented of her rigour, and plunged headlong into the Vistula, and was drowned.

After Vanda's death, the Poles again tried the experiment of placing the government in the hands of vaivodes ; but after much oppression and bloodshed they were glad to raise one ruler to the supreme authority. If you found it difficult to believe the story of Vanda, I am afraid you will find it still more so to believe the story of Premislaus. The Moravians and Hungarians had invaded Poland with superior forces, when Premislaus devised the following stratagem :—He caused a number of helmets and breastplates to be made of the bark of trees, and to be smeared with some glittering paint. This rude imitation of armour he, in the course of the night, fixed upon poles, so as to have the appearance, when the sun should dawn, of a number of armed men at a distance. At break of day, he divided his followers into parties, and attacked the

enemy's camp. The Hungarians, who had kept up no discipline, and thought themselves in security, were now taken by surprise, and the alarm being spread that a numerous army was advancing, were defeated with great slaughter; and Premislaus received the ducal crown from his grateful countrymen as the reward of his stratagem.

George. I think, Mamma, that you can match that story with a better, unless you forget what you once told us of the fright of the French soldiers when they landed at Fishguard, in the year 1797. Do not you recollect that there were then no English soldiers near, or only a few, and that somebody, some nobleman, I think, in the neighbourhood, posted a parcel of old women in red cloaks on a hill to deceive them? I wonder which were most frightened, the old women or the French?

Mrs. M. I know not, George, whether to thank you or not, for that comparison. But, passing this matter over, Premislaus is said to have made a very good duke, and to have died, after a short but prosperous reign, about the year 753.

So many candidates now appeared for the vacant dignity, that the electors were much perplexed whom to choose. At last they hit upon a happy expedient to save themselves all trouble and responsibility, by requiring that the candidates should ride a race for the dukedom. A course was marked out, and a stone pillar erected at the end of it, on which was placed the ducal crown and the other insignia

of authority ; and he who should first reach the pillar was to win the prize. One of the candidates, to make sure, contrived secretly to fix iron spikes in the ground over which the race was to be run, reserving only one part clear for his own horse. The day of trial came, and the scheme succeeded to admiration ; all competitors were overthrown, their horses lamed, and themselves hurt. The clever contriver alone reached the goal, and was in the act of receiving the crown, when his treachery was exposed to the electors by a peasant named Lechus, who had discovered it. The knave was torn in pieces on the spot by the enraged multitude, and Lechus the peasant obtained the crown in his stead.

Lechus III. ruled Poland many years with great wisdom and happiness ; and that he might never be inflated by pride, nor forget his humble origin, he carefully preserved his peasant's dress, and used to have it borne before him on all occasions of ceremony. He died in 803, and is said to have fallen in a battle with the troops of Charlemagne, whose thirst for conquest extended even to these distant regions.

The descendants of Lechus governed Poland for three generations, under the names of Lechus IV., Popiel I., and Popiel II. Popiel I. transferred the seat of government from Cracow to Ghesna first, and to Cruswitz afterwards. Popiel II. was a man of vicious habits, and was also further depraved by the evil influence of a bad and malignant wife. He

poisoned his uncles, who had endeavoured to restrain him, or whom he had been led to suspect. But in this crime he met with his own punishment ; for from their bodies, while yet unburied, issued an army of rats, which pursued him from place to place ; and though he took refuge in a tower in the middle of a lake, followed him there, and then ate up both him and his wife and children alive.

Richard. This is a more stupid invention than any we have had yet !

Mary. As for that other story that came before, of the peasant who kept his old clothes after he was a duke, it put me in mind of Alibeg the Persian, in my book of French fables, who, when he became prime minister, kept his shepherd's habit and his crook in a little closet, and used to go and look at them whenever he felt himself growing proud.

Mrs. M. With Popiel II. ended what the Polish historians call the first class of dukes. On the vacancy caused by the death of this prince, an immense concourse of people assembled at Cruswitz to elect another sovereign, and this assemblage caused so great a scarcity of provisions, that many persons died of hunger in the streets. There dwelt at that time at Cruswitz a wheelwright named Piastus, a man noted for his goodness and charity. To his door came two pilgrims to claim hospitality. The famine raged so cruelly, that Piastus had nothing left to offer them but some wine, the last

remains of a small cask ; but this he gave to them with good will. These pilgrims proved to be angels in disguise, and they promised their kind entertainer that he should have the crown of Poland. They ordered him to distribute the wine to the famishing people : he did so, and it proved to be inexhaustible ; and when the multitude saw the miracle, they chose him for their duke—deeming the man who was thus favoured by heaven the most worthy to be their governor. The reign of Piastus deserves to be styled the golden age of Poland. We are told that, “ his good dispositions serving him in the place of great abilities, under his wise administration injuries were never unredressed, and merit never unrewarded.” Nay, what is more, “ the nobility were ashamed of rebelling against a sovereign who devoted his whole life to make his people happy.”

And here may be supposed to end the fabulous part of the Polish history. What follows, being taken from contemporary authors, or at least from authors who lived not long after the times they wrote of, may be more to be relied on ; yet histories in general, I am obliged to say, though I say it with sorrow, are often written with so much unfairness or carelessness, that we patient compilers, whose sole desire is to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, are frequently at a great loss how to get at it, and must, I am afraid, make many mistakes.

Richard. For my part, I am not sorry that you have got past all those rhodomontade stories, and are coming to something like matters of fact.

Mary. I am sadly afraid that we shall find the matter of fact very dull, and that I shall like the rhodomontades best.

George. And pray, mamma, who are the writers whose histories we may now venture to believe?

Mrs. M. I, you know, do not go farther back than to the Universal History, at the same time consulting such other more modern books as I can. What these books tell us is, that the first in order of time of the Polish historians was Martin Gallus, a monk. He lived in the early part of the twelfth century, and his history begins in 825, and comes down to 1118. He was followed at no great distance of time by Matthew Cholewa and Vincent Hadlubek, both bishops of Cracow. Of subsequent historians, the best is said to be Dlugoas, who comes down as late as to the year 1480.

At this early period of our history it is supposed that the peasants were not in that abject state which they have since been in, but that every Polander was equally free in the eye of the law, and that the only actual slaves were the prisoners who were taken in war.

CONVERSATION III.

THE RACE OF PIASTUS.

[Years after Christ, 830—1082.]

Mrs. M. By whatever means Piastus acquired the ducal dignity, it is not doubted that a native Pole of that name became Duke of Poland about the year 830, and that, in memory of him, all the *native* sovereigns have been since called Piasti, in contradistinction to those who have been foreigners.

There was nothing remarkable about the three next dukes, except their names—Ziemovitus, Lechus V., and Zienomislaus. This last was succeeded, in 962, by his son Mieczlaus, whose reign is memorable for the introduction of Christianity into Poland. This was effected in the following manner:—Mieczlaus having demanded the daughter of the Duke of Bohemia in marriage, the princess, who was a Christian, refused to marry him, unless he would first consent to be baptized. That was no difficulty. The duke became, it is said, a sincere convert, and destroyed, with his own hands, many of the pagan idols of his country, built many churches, and founded the archbishoprics of Gnesna and Cracow, and appointed St. Adelbert, who was very zealous in the propagation of the gospel in

Poland, to be the Archbishop of Gnesna. To show his respect for the sacred writings, he also ordered that when they were read in the churches, every man present should half draw his sword, to signify his readiness to defend the faith. I have read of this custom having been kept up in Poland till the end of the seventeenth century, and indeed I am not sure that it is not kept up still. Mieczlaus was, in 999, succeeded by his son, Boleslaus I., who, to show his respect for the memory of St. Adelbert, who had been murdered by the Prussians, procured his remains, and placed them in a magnificent tomb in the church of Gnesna. Amongst the pilgrims who visited the shrine of this saint was the emperor Otho III., who, in requital of his hospitable reception by the Polish duke, placed with his own hands a royal crown on his head. Boleslaus in his turn showed his gratitude by bestowing on the emperor one of the arms of St. Adelbert; and the two potentates separated, each well pleased with his bargain. Otho also gave his niece Rixa in marriage to Mieczlaus, the new king's son. No kingship could in these days be valid without the consent of the pope. Happily his holiness did not on this occasion withhold it; and thus we see Boleslaus established as the first king of Poland. After a splendid and martial reign, in which he made extensive conquests in Bohemia, Moravia, Russia, Prussia, and Pomerania, and won for himself the title of *Chroby*, or the Terrible, he died in the year

1025. His conquests, however, were but short-lived possessions to Poland, for in the reign of his son, the weak and vicious Mieczlaus II., all the newly-acquired provinces revolted. Mieczlaus II. died in 1034, after a disastrous reign of nine years. He left one son, named Casimir, a youth of amiable disposition, who had received the best education which the times and the circumstances of his country could afford. Still the Poles were fearful that he might inherit too much of his father's bad disposition and character, and were unwilling to confer the crown on him at once. They therefore suspended his election, and appointed his mother, Rixa, regent of the kingdom. But Rixa could not forget her German descent, and soon gave offence to the Poles by the preference which she showed to her own-countrymen. She was banished from Poland, and the unoffending Casimir was also banished at the same time. He having a strong taste for learning retired to France, and applied himself to study in the university of Paris, and, in process of time, took on himself the sacred habit, and became a monk in the Abbey of Clugny.

Poland, meantime, was the scene of the most dreadful disorders. The nobles oppressed the peasantry; the peasantry rose on the nobles; a general dissolution of all order and authority ensued; robberies and murders were committed on every side, and the churches were plundered and often levelled

to the ground by the peasants, who still clung in secret to the idolatrous worship of their forefathers. To add to these calamities, the Russians on one side, and the Bohemians on the other, invaded the country, and sacked and burned some of the chief cities. The Poles now remembered with regret their conduct to Casimir, and believed that, were he recalled, and placed at the head of the government, tranquillity would be restored. It was five years since he had been driven into exile, and the place of his retreat was unknown in Poland. At last he was traced out, and prevailed on to exchange the quiet of his cloister for the cares of government. But another obstacle now appeared. It was necessary to obtain a dispensation from the pope to enable him to cast off his monkish habit. The pope (either Benedict IX. or Clement II., authors are not agreed which) at last granted the desired dispensation, but with the stipulation, as the price of his compliance, that Poland should be subject thenceforward to the capitation tax, which has been called Peter's Pence, because the popes have chosen to style themselves St. Peter's successors.

Mary. I am sorry to interrupt you, Mamma, but I should like to know what a capitation tax means.

Mrs. M. It is a tax levied on every *head*, or on every individual, and has its name from the Latin word *caput*, a head. In England we often call it a *poll* tax.

Richard. Don't you remember, Mary, that in England we had to pay Peter's pence to the pope, till Henry VIII. put an end to it?

Mrs. M. The pope exacted more from the Poles than he did from the English; for besides the contributing Peter's pence, he ordered them to shave their heads and their beards, an injunction which the Poles not only obeyed then, but also have continued till of late years to observe. I have met with Polish gentlemen who have known old Poles who observed it. They excepted, however, a small lock on the crown of the head.

George. They must have been a very dutiful set of people to continue so long to trim their hair according to the pope's directions.

Mrs. M. It is supposed that there were further reasons, which I will explain to you by-and-bye, for this custom. At present we will pursue the thread of our narrative.

When Casimir entered his kingdom, his subjects received him as the harbinger of peace and happiness; nor were they deceived in their expectation. The king applied himself vigorously to rectify the disorders of so many years. He punished offenders, and made the laws to be enforced. He rebuilt the cities and the churches, and by degrees everything was restored to order. The arts and sciences also, till then little cultivated in Poland, were encouraged by his fostering care. But though Casimir devoted himself thus sedulously to all his duties as a

monarch, he would often look back with regret to the tranquillity of his cell. He died in 1058, deeply regretted by his subjects.

His son, Boleslaus II., was more solicitous to shine as a warrior than to promote the arts of peace. His wars with the Bohemians, Hungarians, and Russians were “never ending, still beginning,” and fill many tedious pages of his history. I shall pass them over till we come to the conquest of Kiow or Kiof, in 1074. This city was one of the richest in Russia, and the most civilised. The inhabitants were principally Greek colonists, and had brought with them the arts and luxuries of Constantinople.

After a rigorous blockade, during which the inhabitants had suffered the last extremities of famine, Kiow surrendered to the Polish arms. Boleslaus, instead of giving the town up to plunder, and practising the cruelties but too common at that time, showed himself a generous conqueror, and respected the courage with which the citizens had defended themselves. He distributed provisions among them, and forbade his soldiers to injure either their persons or their property. The Kiovians, grateful for this clemency, regarded him as their deliverer rather than as their conqueror, and courted him to partake, as Hannibal partook, at Capua, of all sorts of refinements and luxuries. To the contagion of these the rough hero of the north gave himself up, and he who had till then been eminent for his temperance and his prudence, now became changed in

character as well as in manners, and grew proud, and despotic, and lost in sloth and in self-indulgence ; his country became odious to him, and during seven years he visited it only once. The soldiers followed the example of their king ; they forgot even their wives and families, and every duty and every tie of home, while revelling in the delights of Kiow. A very extraordinary story follows, for which, however, I think that I have seen a precedent in ancient history. The Polish ladies, seeing themselves thus deserted, sought their revenge by casting off all allegiance to their absent husbands and taking their slaves in their place. The army, on hearing of this domestic revolution, was impatient to return home to suppress it. Accordingly, without waiting for the king's permission, most of the soldiers returned to Poland, leaving Boleslaus without a guard in the heart of Russia. A fierce contest between the rivals followed, in which the wives took the part of their new partners, and fought by their side with desperate courage. While this strange war was waging, Boleslaus arrived with the remains of his army, reinforced by Russians, and brought all parties to order, but not without great bloodshed and cruelty. It does not appear that Boleslaus, after this, ever visited Kiow ; but he did not abandon the vicious habits he had acquired there. Stanislaus, bishop of Cracow, shocked, as is said, at the king's ferocity, refused him admittance into the church, and on this, Boleslaus, deter-

mined, as it would seem, to prove himself as ferocious as he was thought to be, burst into the sanctuary, and killed the bishop with his own hand as he was performing divine service. The bishop was canonized, and his tomb in the cathedral at Cracow had, a few years since, and perhaps still has, two lamps burning before it night and day.

As for the king, his punishment was exemplary and near at hand. The pope, then Gregory VII., excommunicated him, released his subjects from their allegiance, deprived him of his titles of sovereignty, and laid the whole country under an interdict. The authority of the king could not resist the power of the pope. Boleslaus was abandoned by his subjects; no one would render him the smallest service; and at last he fled from the abhorrence of his people, and, after many wanderings, is said to have ended his days in a convent in Carinthia, into which he was received in the humble capacity of cook.

Mary. And now, Mamma, will you tell me why the Poles continued so long to wear their hair short?

Mrs. M. I will first tell you that I rather distrust the story which is told us that the practice originated in an order of the pope. It is also said, and with more probability, to have been an ancient fashion of the Sclavonians, and also to be still preserved among the Tartars.

However, the reason which I alluded to for keep-

ing up the practice is, that a very singular complaint has prevailed in Poland, and in former times more than at present, which chiefly shows itself in the hair; and for that reason it was convenient to wear it very short. This complaint is called *Plica Polonica*, and is almost peculiar to the inhabitants of Poland and Lithuania, and supposed to be partly occasioned by the want of cleanliness in the habits of the people, and the bad water which they are accustomed to drink; and partly by the marshy nature of the soil, and the want of drainage, and the unwholesome exhalations of the close forests with which the country abounds.

Mary. And in what way does all this affect the hair?

Mrs. M. By causing a disorder in the blood, which throws itself out into the hair, and turns every hair into a blood-vessel. It is a most dreadful and loathsome complaint, and is only cured when the whole hair falls off in one horrible corrupted mass. Any attempt to hasten the cure by cutting off the hair before it is ready to come away of itself is almost always certain death.

Mary. I never heard anything so terrible, but I suppose it is only the very poor people who have it.

Mrs. M. They are, of course, more liable to it than others; but I understand that no station is exempt from it.

CONVERSATION IV.

THE RACE OF PIASTUS—(*continued.*)

A.D. 1082—1382.

Mrs. M. THE pope, not satisfied with the punishment which he had inflicted on Boleslaus, made the Poles also pay dearly for the misfortune of having their bishop murdered, by levying large sums from them as an expiation. At last, finding that nothing more was to be drained from this impoverished country, he suffered himself to be appeased, and withdrew his interdict. He allowed Uladislaus, brother to Boleslaus, to be raised to the throne, but forbade him to assume the title of king. Thus the sovereigns of Poland, after having been kings during eighty-seven years, were reduced once more to be merely dukes; and, what was still more mortifying, the royal title was conferred, by the pope and the emperor, on the Duke of Bohemia, the hereditary rival and enemy of Poland.

Uladislaus ruled Poland during twenty-one years, and at his death divided his dominions between his sons Boleslaus and Sbigneus, of whom Sbigneus was illegitimate. The latter years of Uladislaus had been greatly disturbed by dissensions between these brothers, and he hoped, by this impartiality, to satisfy them both; but it only furnished them

with the more matter of disagreement. The death of Sbigneus, of which the accounts are very contradictory, at length left Boleslaus in possession of the whole of Poland. He was perpetually at war, and is said to have fought forty battles, and to have been victorious in them all, and to have eclipsed the glory even of Boleslaus I., who had been entitled *the Great*. This martial duke is said to have established the *Pospolite*, or Polish militia.

Boleslaus III. died in 1139, and left five sons — Uladislaus, Boleslaus, Mieczlaus, Henry, and Casimir ; among the four elder of whom he divided all his dominions ; while to the last, who was still a child, he left no portion. On being remonstrated with on this unequal division, he replied in the following enigmatical words :—“The four wheels of the chariot will want a driver.” This enigma was supposed to receive its explanation when, upwards of thirty-five years afterwards, Casimir, his brothers being dead, became sole duke. The seeds of dissension among his brothers did not wait long for the ripening. Uladislaus attempted to usurp the rights of the three younger : they resisted ; and he was deposed. Boleslaus IV., his next brother, was made supreme duke ; and the duchy of Silesia was assigned to Uladislaus ; and thus this great province became for ever severed from Poland. About the year 1339, it was annexed to the crown of Bohemia ; and was afterwards conquered and made subject to Prussia by Frederick II. Of Henry,

Uladislaus's third brother, we learn that he raised a considerable body of crusaders, and joined the Christian army in Palestine. In the short space, however, of one campaign, the greater part of this brave prince's army melted away, and he returned to Poland with little else than the high reputation which was always attached to all who had fought well in the Holy Land, and also that of having made large donations to the Knights of St. John. Henry was afterwards killed in a battle with the Prussians, and Boleslaus died in 1171. Mieczlaus was now the only remaining wheel of the chariot. While young in years he had acquired the surname of *the Aged*, from the gravity of his appearance, and was esteemed a person of extraordinary wisdom; but no sooner was he elevated to the sovereignty, than he began to bear himself so tyrannically, that it seemed as if either his nature were changed, or else he had till then played the hypocrite. His conduct became at last so insupportable, that the nobles deposed him, and called on Casimir, his youngest and, as has been said, *unportioned*, brother, to take his place; but Casimir, unwilling to accept what he considered as the right of his brother, was with difficulty prevailed on to accept the proffered dignity. At last he did accept it, and then showed himself fully competent to the charge. He acquired the title of *the Just*; and the Poles still esteem him as one of their best sovereigns.

One of Casimir's first cares was to ameliorate, as far as it was possible, the condition of the peasants. It was then the custom in Poland to compel the inhabitants of every district through which the sovereign travelled to be at the cost of entertaining him, and of supplying him with horses, and other equipments and conveyances, for himself and his suite. The same custom you, I believe, know has prevailed in many countries, both in ancient and in modern times ; and I think I once told you that it is alluded to particularly in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, verse 41. By degrees, the nobles claimed and enforced the same privilege, until it had become a very serious oppression. Casimir abolished it, and with it many other abuses. There is an anecdote of his early life which speaks highly for his generosity of mind and right feeling. Being one day engaged at play with one of his nobles, he won from him all his money. This exasperated the loser so much that he struck the prince, and then fled, terrified at what he had done. He was pursued and taken, and condemned to lose his head ; but Casimir caused the sentence to be revoked, and returned him his money, saying that he himself, as encouraging, by his example, the pernicious practice of gambling, was chiefly in fault, and adding, that it was but natural that the loser, "since he could not revenge himself on Fortune, should attack her favourite."

Mary. I did not know that people ever gambled so long ago.

Mrs. M. The vice of gambling is of very old standing ; and Tacitus tells us that the ancient Germans were so passionately addicted to it, that they would gamble away all they had, and at last themselves ; and that it was no uncommon thing for a man thus to become the slave of the man with whom he had played, and who won him.

Richard. That is worse even than the gamblers of our days, who stake only their fortunes.

Mrs. M. I really scarcely see the difference ; for if a man ruin himself by gambling, he probably either gets imprisoned for debt, or is obliged to fly his country, and thus loses his liberty quite as much as if he had staked himself at first, instead of his money.

Mary. And now, Mamma, let us go on. I want to know what the Poles did when they had lost Casimir.

Mrs. M. For some time they did very ill indeed. Mieczlaus, the old duke, disputed the succession with Lechus VI., son of Casimir ; but, on the death of Mieczlaus, in 1203, Lechus obtained it.

A long period follows, in which the annals of Poland present little that is worthy of notice, except that it was devastated by frequent inroads of the Tartars, who, though repulsed, always left ruin in their track ; and also by a confused succession of

civil wars amongst the various competitors for the sovereignty. After Lechus VI., Boleslaus V., Lechus VII., and Henry fill the line of the Dukes of Poland. In 1296, Premislaus II. re-assumed the title of king, and was solemnly crowned at Gnesna, but was assassinated a few months afterwards. Premislaus was followed by Uladislaus Locticus, who was deposed ; and the crown was then conferred on Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia ; but on the death of Wenceslaus, in 1305, the deposed Uladislaus was re-elected.

The early part of the reign of this sovereign was chiefly taken up with a war with the Teutonic knights, who, during the late civil wars, had obtained from Conrade, Duke of Masovia, a settlement at Culm, in Prussia. Not satisfied, however, with this donation, they had sought to extend their authority over other parts of Prussia and Pomerania. To give a tolerable pretext to these usurpations, they pretended to purchase the right of the Marquis of Brandenburgh (though he had no right to give) to these provinces ; and they alike defied the King of Poland and the Pope. Uladislaus, however, defeated them in a pitched battle, and might have annihilated their whole order. He was, nevertheless, satisfied with compelling them to a long truce, and to a promise to restore all the territory of which they had obtained wrongful possession. But the promises of the Teutonic Knights were seldom kept : so Uladislaus found to his cost ;

and the last advice which he gave on his death-bed to his son, Casimir III., was to bid him beware how he put any faith in them. Uladislaus obtained, a short time before his death, the consent of the Pope to the resumption of the royal title by the kings of Poland.

George. Pray, Mamma, who and what were these Teutonic Knights? Were they at all like our old friends at Malta?

Mrs. M. They were alike in being at once a military and an ecclesiastical order, and, like the Knights of St. John, derived their origin from the Holy wars; but in other respects there was little resemblance. The name of Teutonic comes from Teutones, the ancient name of the Germans, and the order sprang from a small number of German gentlemen, who accompanied the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa to Palestine in 1188, and who bound themselves by religious vows, and styled themselves at first the Knights of St. George. This title was afterwards changed to that of Knights of St. Mary; and Pope Celestine, in 1191, gave them that of the Teutonic Knights of the Hospital of St. Mary the Virgin. Like their brothers, the Hospitallers, they professed it to be the object of their institution to succour distressed Christians, and to keep up a perpetual war with infidels; but from the time of their expulsion from Palestine, they seemed to consider themselves absolved from every principle that could check their ambition, or stand in the way of their power.

Casimir III. succeeded to his father's throne in 1333, and soon had occasion to feel the truth of his father's warning in regard to the knights, who had accepted the late truce only in order to recover their strength, and had no mind to fulfil the conditions of it. Casimir, too, on his part, was in no humour to enforce their compliance. He himself was now meditating an invasion of Russia, though with no other pretext than the seasonableness of the opportunity, at a time when that country was torn in pieces by intestine commotions. He accordingly invaded and conquered the province of Russia Nigra, and annexed it to his own dominions. This conquest he followed up with that of Masovia. Having thus satisfied his ambition as a conqueror, he devoted the rest of his life to the improving the political state and the laws of his country; and thus obtained for himself, by the justest of all titles, the appellation which is given him of Casimir the Great.

The Poles had gone on till this reign without any written or regular laws. All causes were decided by custom, or at the will of the judge—an order of things liable, as you may suppose, to continual abuses. Casimir framed, with great attention, a written code, which was approved by a general Diet, and made public; and of this the people soon felt the benefit. The formation of the Diet itself, also, though commenced by Uladislaus about two years before his death, and not completed till

the reign of Casimir IV., may be referred in part, if not principally, to Casimir the Great. This prince, moreover, not only applied himself to the making laws, but was also vigilant in enforcing obedience to them. He had every part of his kingdom under his watchful eye almost at once. He protected the peasants from the oppression of the nobles ; and he benefited the nobles, and, indeed, all classes of his people, by the encouragement which he gave to industry. He also inclosed his chief cities with strong walls, and strengthened the most exposed parts of his frontier ; and it is said that to him Poland is indebted for the greater part of her churches, palaces, fortresses, and towns. He founded the University of Cracow, in imitation of that of Paris ; and, above all, he secured to himself the affections of his people, by the wisdom and integrity with which he governed.

George. It quite makes up for all those tiresome people, who, like “the lion and the unicorn, were always fighting for the crown,” to come to such a good king as this.

Mrs. M. The reign of Casimir the Great stands pre-eminent in the Polish annals ; but there is no class of people which has more cause to respect his memory than the Polish Jews ; for it is to him, in great measure, that they owe the extraordinary advantages which they enjoyed in Poland.

Richard. And why did he befriend them so especially ?

Mrs. M. For the sake, it is supposed, of a beautiful Jewess whom he held in high favour. Certain it is that in his reign the Jews flocked in great numbers to Poland, and also that they have found it a genial soil ever since.

Mary. Why should the soil of Poland be so genial to the Jews ? It is not at all like Judea.

Mrs. M. Perhaps I have not spoken literally enough, and I must therefore explain myself. Poland is a country which was extremely suited to the Jews, because the Polish nobles hated drudgery of every kind, and abstained from trade. They loved splendour and luxuries, however, which the Jews, on the other hand, whenever they can get paid for it, are always ready to furnish. Indeed, I understand that in the cities those industrious people used to engross almost every kind of active employment. Mr. Townson, who visited Cracow in 1793, says that it swarms with Jews, who, besides their usual businesses of usury, and selling old clothes, acted as porters, cicerones, and lackeys, and, dressed in their long black robes, offered their services to travellers as they entered the city. Since that time I understand that many of them have been obliged to exchange their peaceable occupations for others far less suited to their habits. The Emperor of Russia has enrolled two regiments of Polish Jews, and finds that they can, when they please, make excellent soldiers.

Richard. And this, I should suppose, is the first

experiment that has been made on the valour of the Jews since the siege of Jerusalem.

Mrs. M. We must now go back to our history. Casimir, who had no children, was anxious to secure the crown of Poland to his nephew Lewis, King of Hungary. Lewis was accordingly elected, on his uncle's death in 1370. The *pacta conventa*, of which I before spoke to you, were first introduced on the occasion of this election, and on account of the ties by which Lewis was connected with a foreign state. You know already the general nature of these *pacta*; and other particular conditions were frequently added in order to suit the circumstances of the time. The conditions imposed upon this occasion were exceedingly displeasing to the new King, as implying that his subjects entertained great suspicions of him. And, certainly, his after conduct fully showed that these suspicions were not ill founded; for, almost immediately after his coronation, he quitted Poland, taking with him the regalia, to prevent their being bestowed on any one else. He appointed his mother Rixa regent of the kingdom. She was sister to the late king Casimir the Great, but unhappily had not her brother's capacity for government, and everything soon fell into disorder. The newly-conquered Russian provinces revolted, the Lithuanians invaded Poland, and the Poles themselves were not intrusted with the defence of their own country; but all the fortresses were garrisoned with

Hungarians. With all this the Poles were of course exceedingly dissatisfied, and they sent a sharp remonstrance to the king, who came and soon drove out the Lithuanians, and reduced the revolted provinces to obedience. But though he thus rescued Poland from its invaders, he still seemed resolved on doing everything he could to mortify and offend the Poles. He increased the number of foreign troops, and filled the highest offices of state with Hungarians. But what was the greatest affront of all, was his removing the assemblage of the diet from Poland, and obliging it to meet at Zwollen, in Hungary. He also endeavoured to force Sigismund, Marquis of Brandenburg, on the Poles as his successor, and sent him to reside at Gnesna, under the protection of an Hungarian guard.

For twelve years Poland groaned under the yoke of this disagreeable master, whose faults did not proceed so much from an altogether tyrannical and evil nature, as from his dislike to his Polish subjects; for to the Hungarians he was kind and considerate. He died in 1382, leaving two daughters, Mary, who was married to Sigismund, Marquis of Brandenburg, and Hedwiga.

In Lewis ended the Kings of the race of Piastus, which had governed Poland 558 years.

CONVERSATION V.

THE RACE OF JAGELLO.

[Years after Christ 1382—1506.]

Mrs. Markham. THE Poles, now left to themselves, would not elect Sigismond, but made a proffer of the crown to Hedwiga, on condition that she should marry a husband of their choosing, who should always reside in Poland. The condition being agreed to, the young princess, who was only fifteen, came into Poland, and was crowned at Cracow with all suitable magnificence. She was of course soon besieged by suitors, each soliciting to obtain the royal prize of her hand. The rest of the story looks so much as if it were taken from an old romance, that you will think I have been studying Tristan, or Huon de Bordeaux, instead of the pages of grave historians. To go on with it, however, such as it is. The two most favoured of the candidates for the hand of Hedwiga were Jagello, Duke of Great Lithuania, and Prince William of Austria, brother to the Emperor. This last was young and handsome, splendid in his dress, and engaging in his manners; and Hedwiga's choice fell on him. But young princesses and grave sena-

tors do not always estimate merit by the same criterions. The fine clothes and the handsome face of the Austrian prince weighed as nothing in the minds of the Polish nobles, when set in the scale against the Duchy of Lithuania, which Jagello promised to annex irrevocably to Poland, if Hedwiga would marry him. Nor did they think it any objection that the Lithuanians were barbarians, and that Jagello himself was a pagan. The Lithuanian territory would be a most valuable acquisition to Poland, and that overbalanced all objections, particularly as Jagello was not only ready to become a Christian himself, but also to oblige his subjects to follow his example. But all these good reasons had little value in the eyes of poor Hedwiga, till the great duke came in person. He had made his first offers only by his ambassadors. She had pictured him to herself as a mere barbarian, and she had shrunk from such an alliance; and though a reluctant consent was extorted from her, yet before the treaty of marriage was concluded, her courage failed her, and she resolved still to marry the prince of Austria if possible. She contrived to send him a secret message, and to have an interview with him in the palace. But the nobles, having intimation of his being there, surrounded the palace, obliged the prince to withdraw, and detained the unhappy queen as a sort of prisoner till the arrival of Jagello, who came with a numerous army to claim his bride. Hedwiga for

some time refused to admit him to her presence; but when at last she consented to see him, she was agreeably surprised to find that this dreaded savage was both handsome and agreeable. Finding also that all opposition was in vain, she consented to marry him.

Mary. Alas, poor Hedwiga! For my part, I wonder how these tiresome Poles ever got any people to be their kings and queens.

Mrs. M. The events which I have thus briefly related occupied four years; and in 1386 all preliminaries being settled, Jagello was baptized and elected King of Poland by the title of Uladislaus IV.

Although the union of Lithuania with Poland was very advantageous to both countries, and to Poland especially, it was some time before two nations, who had for many centuries been inveterate enemies, could consider themselves as friends, or as being one people. The Poles themselves were in a very imperfect state of civilization; but still the Lithuanians were far behind them. They spoke a different language: their nobles were even more despotic, and their peasants more slothful;—and, what was more than all, they were pagans, and addicted to the grossest superstitions. They were worshippers of fire, and their great Deity was the sun, and when the beams of this luminary were obscured, they attempted to propitiate and prevail on him to shine again, by offering human victims

in sacrifice. Their priests were required to keep lamps always burning, and, like the vestal virgins of the Romans, were punished with death if they suffered them to go out. The Lithuanians also cherished serpents and other reptiles in their houses as objects of worship, and continued, even so late as to the seventeenth century, to regard them as sacred.

One of the first acts of Uladislaus IV. was to take with him into Lithuania a number of the Polish clergy, who might inculcate on the people the doctrines of Christianity. And while they were thus employed, he laboured on his part to extirpate Paganism, by cutting down the sacred groves, destroying the temples, extinguishing the burning lamps, and treading the cherished serpents under foot. The astonished people, when they saw no lightning strike the destroyer, and that the sun shone as brightly as before on his ruined temples, became convinced that their gods were powerless to avenge themselves, and consequently turned with the more willing and teachable ears to the new doctrines, which came recommended to their attention both by their own inherent truth and excellence, and also by the authority of their sovereign. The political state, however, of Lithuania was, throughout the whole of Uladislaus's long reign of forty-eight years, very much disturbed. Vitowda, or Witold, his cousin, who was intrusted with the government of the duchy, entered into a rash war with the great Timur, or Tamerlane, under whom

the Tartars were now become more formidable than ever to all their neighbours. Vitowda afterwards attempted to raise himself to an independent authority, but his attempts were frustrated, and he died, as it is said, of vexation. The most material feature, however, of this long reign, was a bitter warfare with the Teutonic Knights, who at one time overran and possessed themselves of many of the Polish provinces, but who were finally defeated and subdued.

Queen Hedwiga died in 1399. Her marriage is said not to have been a happy one; for although the king was exceedingly attached to her, he was of a jealous disposition, and could not forget the preference which she had formerly shown for prince William of Austria. She was much beloved by the people, and was called "the star of Poland." An anecdote is told of her which shows the amiableness of her character. The king had unjustly caused some cattle to be seized, which, however, he restored afterwards. "The cattle," said she, "are restored, but who shall restore the tears?"

Uladislaus (Jagello) died in 1434, leaving two sons by his fourth and last wife, a princess of Lithuania. These were his successor Uladislaus V. and Casimir, who was made Duke of Lithuania, holding that province as a fief of the Polish crown.

Uladislaus V. was not more than ten years old at his father's death. His election was opposed on account of his youth; but the wish to preserve the

union with Lithuania prevailed over this objection. When not more than fifteen, this youthful monarch was invited to accept also the crown of Hungary, then threatened with invasion by the Turks under Amurath II. He set himself immediately to make the utmost exertions in a cause which was then considered as being the cause not of Hungary only, or of Poland, but also of Christendom. He appointed the brave John Huniades, a hero whose name is among those which are most celebrated in the long contest with the Mahometan powers, to be the vaivode of Transylvania; and under his command the Turks were surprised and defeated with the loss of 30,000 men. Amurath sued for peace, which was concluded and sealed by mutual oaths. But Uladislaus unfortunately was soon after persuaded by the Pope's legate that there was no faith to be kept with infidels. A favourable moment offered itself for breaking the treaty, and this was too great a temptation to be resisted by a prince impatient to signalize himself. He accordingly marched a large army into Moldavia. Amurath met him near Varna, in Moldavia, and totally routed him. This was nine years before the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. Uladislaus was left dead in the field, and with him the cardinal legate, whose pernicious advice thus cost the young king both his honour and his life. It was some time before either the Poles or the Hungarians could believe that their king was dead. They per-

suaded themselves that he had escaped from the battle, and would soon reappear. But at the end of some months they gave up all hope of his return, and the Poles elected his brother Casimir to be their king.

The most remarkable event of the reign of Casimir IV. is, that after a severe contest, he checked effectually the power of the Teutonic Knights, and thus prepared the way for the abolition of that turbulent order in a following reign. Marienburg, the knights' strong hold, fell into his hands, and the knights were compelled to cede Pomerania, Culm, and some other places, but were allowed to retain a part of Prussia, on condition that their grand master did homage for it to the crown of Poland.

Casimir died in the year 1492. We are told that in an interview which he had on some occasion with the King of Sweden, at Dantzic, the latter began the conversation in Latin. Neither Casimir nor any of his courtiers understood that language, and, at last, a monk was sent for to act as interpreter. Casimir was so much ashamed of his ignorance, that he published an edict enjoining the diligent study of Latin; and we are further told that we have to trace to this edict the familiar use of Latin as being almost the vernacular language in Poland. Indeed, learning of all kinds began about this time to make some progress. Schools were established, into which not only the sons of the nobles, but also of the serfs, were admitted.

Janinski, the son of a Polish peasant, was crowned with laurel by Pope Clement VII., in reward for his elegant Latin verses. You have read, I believe, in the Life of Petrarch, of this custom of crowning with laurel by the Popes. Printing was introduced into Poland nearly as soon as in England. The first printing press was erected at Cracow in 1474.

Casimir IV. married a daughter of Albert, King of Hungary and Bohemia, and had four sons. Uladislaus, the eldest, was raised in his father's lifetime to the thrones of Hungary and Bohemia. The three others were Sigismond, John Albert, and Alexander, duke of Lithuania. Uladislaus was by common consent excluded from succession to the crown of Poland, lest the national interests might, in his hands, be sacrificed to those of the countries of which he was already ruler; and after violent debates, John Albert, the third son, was raised to the throne. He, like the rest of his race, was fond of war, but he had more of its fatigues and dangers than of its triumphs. He and his brother Uladislaus led an army of 80,000 men into Moldavia to defend that province against the Turks; but the Polish king had better have staid at home to have secured his own territories, to which he was soon obliged to return, with only the broken remains of his army. The Turks and Wallachians soon afterwards made an irruption into Poland itself, and carried off 100,000 of the inhabitants

and an immense booty. The severity of the climate did more for Albert on this occasion than he could do for himself, and forty thousand of the invaders perished by hunger and cold. Albert reigned about eight years, and died after a few days' illness at Thorn, in Prussia, while on his way to call the Teutonic grand master to a severe account for having neglected to take the oath of obedience.

The throne, now again vacant, was contested by the two elder sons of Casimir. But the claims of both were again set aside, and the youngest son, namely, Alexander, duke of Lithuania, was elected king in 1501. It was also provided in the Diet held on this occasion that Lithuania should no longer be governed, as it had hitherto been, by a separate duke or viceroy, but should be entirely incorporated with Poland, send deputies to the same Diet, and possess the same laws, privileges, and interests.

Alexander is described to us as a prince endowed with many good qualities, particularly that of generosity. But he carried his profusion in disposing of the revenue of the crown to so great an extent, that a law, called the *Statutum Alexandrinum*, was passed in the succeeding reign, to restrain all such donations in future. Alexander was also noted for his singular taciturnity, and for his bodily strength. His strength, however, could not secure him from disease. He fell ill, and on being summoned into Lithuania to quell an incursion of the Tartars and Moldavians, he was obliged to be carried in a litter

at the head of his army. When he reached Wilna, he was constrained to remain there, while his army and that of the Tartars encountered; and when the news was brought to him that the Poles were victorious, he was in the agonies of death and could not speak. Yet he was able to express his thankfulness to Heaven that his country was delivered from these barbarians. He reigned only five years.

Mary. These Poles seem to have been more beset with enemies than any other people I ever heard of. Sometimes the Russians come, then the Turks, and now the Tartars.

Mrs. M. But of all these enemies, the Tartars were those whom they dreaded the most. The object of these marauders was neither glory nor dominion, but solely plunder. They gave no signal of war, nor notice of their approach, and the inhabitants of peaceful villages, unconscious that any enemy was near, were often suddenly surrounded, their houses set on fire, their property pillaged, the young and the able-bodied carried away as slaves, and the rest murdered or left to die of misery and hunger. These barbarians commonly made their incursions in the winter, when the frost had rendered the rivers and marshes passable, and entered the frontiers by unfrequented valleys, every turn and step of which they knew; and they made no fires in their camps at night, that their approach might excite as little observation as possible. Every man, besides the horse he rode, had two others as relays.

Thus, to every hundred men there were three hundred horses. After they had penetrated into the interior, they separated; a number of squadrons from the main body skirmished about in search of plunder, riding generally in good order about a hundred abreast, the rest following in file. At the sight of one of these moving bodies, which looked at first like a cloud in the horizon, the trembling peasants gave themselves up for lost, knowing but too well that both they and all they possessed would be made the spoil of the exterminators. While these squadrons were scouring the country, the main body marched steadily forward at a quiet pace. It was their general policy to take to flight, as the ancient Parthians used to do, whenever an enemy appeared in any force to oppose them, and, like the Parthians, they discharged showers of arrows at their pursuers. If not intercepted in their movements, they commonly turned homewards after having advanced about fifty or sixty leagues into the country, taking a fresh track to increase their plunder, and to avoid any parties of Poles or Cossacks that might be lying in wait for them. When they had recrossed the frontier, and reached their own desert plains which lay beyond, their custom was to halt and make a division of the plunder; and then came the saddest and most miserable scene of all. The wretched prisoners were parcelled out among their enslavers, children torn from their parents, wives from their husbands, friends and neighbours

separated, never to meet again. Many also of these poor victims were sent in droves to Constantinople, to be sold like cattle to the Turks.

George. I cannot imagine how the Poles, so brave and active as they were, ever suffered these people to enter their territories.

Mrs. M. It would have been no easy thing to have kept them off, particularly as the Tartars had a decided advantage over them in the fleetness of their horses, and in being better bowmen. It is also said, but I do not know with what truth, that the Tartars excel not only the Poles, but all other people also, in quickness of sight, and in being able to distinguish objects at a very great distance. And certainly there is something peculiar in the form and appearance of the long narrow eyes of this singular people.



CONVERSATION VI.

RACE OF JAGELLO—(*concluded*).

[Years after Christ, 1506—1572.]

SIGISMOND I.—SIGISMOND II. (AUGUSTUS).

Mrs. M. ALEXANDER was succeeded by his brother Sigismond, who made it his first care to regulate the finances of the crown, which had been left in an embarrassed state by his brother's profuseness. He next turned his attention to the improvement of the internal government of the country, and the promotion of his people's happiness and prosperity, in all which objects he was ably seconded by his minister Bonner, whose name is still venerated by the Polish people.

But what is chiefly memorable in the reign of Sigismond is the extinction of the power of the Teutonic order. Albert, marquis of Brandenburg, the nephew of Sigismond, was now the grand master, and he, having the interests of the order less at heart than his own, not only made peace with Poland, but also went so far as to renounce his vows, and to embrace the reformed religion. In return, Sigismond granted to him that part of Prussia

which is called Ducal Prussia, to be held as a fief to Poland ; and thus was laid the foundation of the kingdom of Prussia. The example of the grand master was followed by many of the knights, who cast aside their religious habit, and married, and settled in Prussia as peaceable men. The rest retired into Franconia, and the order, after having been for nearly three centuries the scourge of the north of Europe, dwindled into insignificance.

Mary. I am very glad we have got rid of them now, and I hope they never revived again.

Mrs. M. The order has never revived ; but the vestiges of its former power are still to be seen in the Castle of Marienburg, which, though in ruins, shows how strong it must formerly have been. The great hall of the chapter is still in good preservation, or at least it was so a few years ago, when our countryman, Dr. Granville, visited it. He describes it as an apartment forty-five feet square and thirty feet high, with a vaulted roof, supported, as many of the chapter-houses of our own cathedrals are, by a single pillar in the centre. Dr. Granville was told the following anecdote of a narrow escape which this pillar at Marienburg is said to have had. When Uladislaus IV. was laying siege to the castle, some traitorous knights sent him secret information that if a cannon were fired in the right direction, it would cut the pillar of the chapter-house in two, and bring down the roof, to the destruction of all who might be below. It was ac-

cordingly agreed that when the rest of the knights were assembled in the chapter-house, these traitors should hang out a red cap from an upper window of the castle, by way of signal. The signal was made, and the cannon fired, but not with so true an aim as had been intended. The ball glanced aside, and lodged in the wall beyond, and the doctor says that he saw it, and I have no doubt but that it is still considered at Marienburg as, if not a living, yet a very substantial evidence for the truth of the story.

And now, after this digression, we will return to our history.

The family of Jagello had at this time reached the summit of its prosperity. Sigismond possessed Poland and Lithuania, the duchies of Smolensko and Severia, besides some other provinces ; and his nephew Lewis, the son of Uladislaus, who had died in 1516, ruled over Hungary, Bohemia, and Silesia. This tide of prosperity began to turn first in Hungary. In 1526 that kingdom was invaded by the Sultan Solyman II. Lewis was slain, and his army defeated in a bloody battle at Mohacz ; and had not the sultan been called away to attend to other affairs, the subjugation of the whole of Hungary would probably have followed. Sigismond died in 1548, in a good old age. His reign, as far as his own dominions were concerned, was of an uninterrupted prosperity. He was buried in the cathedral at Cracow, and the inscription on his monument records his merits and his good fortune. He was a

man noted, like his brother Alexander, for his extraordinary personal strength, and it was said that he could break the hardest metals with his hands.

George. Pray, Mamma, was this sultan Solyman our old acquaintance, who took Rhodes from the Knights of St. John, and afterwards besieged Malta?

Mrs. M. The same; and the invasion of Hungary was his next exploit after the taking of Rhodes. Not indeed that his victory over the Hungarian monarch was any extraordinary triumph. For Lewis, who was a very weak man, intrusted the conduct of his army to a Franciscan monk, who, in the dress of his order and girt with its cord, marched at the head of the troops, but was no fitting general to match with Solyman. Among the consequences of this great defeat was the loss of Buda, and afterwards of Pest. The king fell unheeded in the heat of the engagement, and his body was not found till long afterwards.

Lewis's daughter had married Ferdinand of Austria, king of the Romans, the brother of the emperor Charles V., and thus the crowns of Hungary and Bohemia were alienated for ever from the house of Jagello, and annexed to the hereditary dominions of Austria. After the battle of Mohacz, however, this great inheritance was but precarious, so great was the terror of the arms of Solyman.

George. I think I heard lately of some story or other concerning that siege of Buda.

Mrs. M. Buda was the city in which Matthias

Corvinus, a former King of Hungary, had collected a very valuable library out of the manuscripts which had been dispersed at the taking of Constantinople. These manuscripts were placed in a tower, and thirty secretaries were constantly employed in collating and transcribing them. But those precious relics of antiquity had no value in the eyes of the Turks, except for their rich bindings, for the sake of which the books were torn to pieces and destroyed. In 1665, a hundred and forty years after the destruction of the library, the emperor Leopold sent Lambescius, a learned scholar, to Buda, in the hope that some valuable fragments might have escaped from the general sack; but nothing was found except some printed works of no consequence. It is said that artillery was first used in Poland in this reign. It is singular that so martial a people as the Poles should not sooner have adopted so powerful an engine of war.

George. And yet it has often been my notion that the man who pestered poor Hotspur in Shakespeare by talking of his antipathy to these vile guns had something right in that saying after all. I am sure I should like fighting with shields and lances a great deal better.

Mrs. M. The late king had secured the succession to his son so firmly, that Sigismund II. had only to place himself on the throne, without undergoing the ceremonies and delays of an election. But although the people thus relinquished their

right to choose their king, they were by no means willing to relinquish their claim of choosing a wife for him ; and were exceedingly displeased by his presuming to marry, without asking their leave, the widow of a poor Lithuanian vaivode. They even required him to divorce her, but this demand he stoutly resisted, saying that, if he could desert his wife, he should think himself unworthy of being their monarch. In the early part of this reign a continual war was maintained with Russia. But though this war gave the Poles ample employment of the sort they seemed to like best, yet the details of it would afford you but little instruction. The chief result was the acquisition of a part of Livonia. That province had been a divided possession between the archbishop of Riga and an order of knights called *Ensiferi*, or the *sword-bearers*, an order which had been much connected with the Templars. These knights having a quarrel with the Archbishop, called in the aid of Poland ; and the grand master, John Kettler, following the example which had been set him by Albert of Brandenburgh, renounced his order, and surrendered Livonia to Sigismond, receiving in return the duchy of Courland, to be held as a fief of the kingdom of Poland.

The principles of the reformation were at this time making a rapid progress in many of the northern countries of Europe ; and the violence of the controversies thus produced, and the tenaciousness with which the Roman Catholics maintained

the authority which they had usurped during the dark ages, gave rise to numerous tumults and civil wars. Sigismond's judicious conduct kept Poland, as far as the affairs of religion were concerned, in a state of tranquillity. Indeed he was himself suspected of leaning towards the protestants; he permitted their books to be printed in his dominions, and he also afforded a ready shelter to many persons who were driven from their own countries because they professed the doctrines of the reformation. Among others, he gave an asylum to two English people, Mr. Bertie and his wife, the duchess of Suffolk, who were obliged to fly from England to avoid the persecutions of Queen Mary.

Mary. O, Mamma, do tell us all about them! It will be quite delightful, after hearing of nothing for a long time but of Russians, and Prussians, and Pomeranians, and Moldavians, and such people, to hear something once more about the English.

Mrs. M. Their story is a very remarkable one, and some other time I will tell it you. At present we must be content with the Poles and their neighbours, and I sincerely wish, for your sake, that their history were more entertaining.

Richard. I assure you, Mamma, that I find it entertaining enough. It is so very pleasant to be informed about countries of which one was before quite ignorant.

Mrs. M. I am, nevertheless, in hopes that now we have almost done with the Jagellos, we shall

come to more interesting matter than we have yet had.

Sigismond died in 1572, and in him the male descendants of Jagello became extinct, after having governed Poland during 186 years, and produced seven monarchs. We will not dismiss this king, the last of his family, without adding that we are told that he was "meek, affable, liberal, brave, and sagacious, and acquired the esteem and affection of his subjects, on account of the interest which he took in their happiness." The permission given by Sigismond to the Protestants to print their books in his dominions caused the art of printing to flourish exceedingly in Poland. A botanist of the name of Adam Zaluzianski published about this time in Poland a book of plants called *Methodus Herbaria*, in which he is said to have anticipated the botanical arrangement of Linnæus. Nor ought I to omit that Poland may boast of being the country of the great astronomer Copernicus, whose father was a citizen of Cracow, and who was himself born at Thorn in Polish Prussia in 1473. In a diet held in the year 1569 in this reign, the union was completed between Lithuania and Poland.

Sigismond had no children and only two sisters, Catharine and Anne. Catharine, the eldest, married John Vasa, King of Sweden, and had one son, Sigismond. Anne, at the time of her brother's death, was unmarried, but was afterwards the wife of Stephen Battori, prince of Transylvania.

Richard. I can well believe, Mamma, what you say, that the art of printing once flourished in Poland exceedingly; for I think I never saw more books together of a more frightful size than all those folio volumes which are lettered on the back *Fratres Poloni*, and which we saw, looking just as if they had never been opened, in the public library at Oxford. Pray what are they all about?

Mrs. M. They are, as I have been told, on the Socinian controversy, which had its first rise in Poland, or at least first grew into considerable notice in that country in the latter end of this reign.

CONVERSATION VII.

[Years after Christ 1574—1586.]

HENRY OF VALOIS.—STEPHEN BATTORI.

Mrs. M. THE crown of Poland—which, through the personal influence of the monarchs and respect for their family, had, for a long time past, been in practice almost hereditary, though by the constitution elective—now, by the death of Sigismond without children, became opened to very free competition. Long before Sigismond breathed his last, many of the European courts had been secretly at work amongst the Polish nobles to secure partisans for the candidates whom they respectively meant to propose. A country of such extended dominion, and with so many dependencies, was now, as they thought, a prize worth contending for, notwithstanding the encroachments which had been made from time to time on the power of the King.

No sooner was the crown vacant than the several candidates openly declared themselves. The most conspicuous were John III., Czar of Muscovy; Ernest, son of the Emperor of Austria; Sigismond, prince of Sweden, nephew of the late king; and Stephen Battori. The pretensions, however, of all

which a bear is driven to his stake. He had already found also, that although his election had been rather a hurried business, still the nobles had not been hurried into any forgetfulness of their own interests in the affair. All the conditions which they demanded had been readily complied with by the French court, the difference between making promises and keeping them being a difference which was perfectly understood by Catherine de Medici and her sons. There was one condition, nevertheless, so startling, that Henry hesitated to accede to it. This was the condition that he should marry the princess Anne, sister to the late king, a princess of mature age, being about thirty years older than himself.

Mary. O, Mamma, that was not fair !

Mrs. M. In other respects, the reception which the young king received in Poland ought to have reconciled him to his lot. The Poles were charmed with his graceful carriage and his French manners, and he soon became exceedingly popular. But while he was yet in the zenith of his popularity, he received the news of his brother's death ; and fearing that his loving subjects would interpose to prevent his departure for France, he left Cracow secretly in the night in disguise, flying from his palace like a fugitive from a prison. He was pursued by some of the nobles, and overtaken before he had gone many leagues, but was inexorable to all their entreaties to return. When the populace

heard of this desertion of their king, they were so exceedingly enraged at the indignity done to their country, that they would have massacred every Frenchman to be found in Cracow, had not the magistrates placed guards in all the streets.

Mary. But it was very unreasonable to be angry with the poor man for preferring to be king of his own country.

Richard. In my mind, they were great fools for ever thinking of giving their crown to a Frenchman: Poland and France are so different!

Mrs. M. There is, nevertheless, a considerable resemblance between the national characters of the Poles and the French. The people of both countries are social, brave, and fond of splendour. The Sieur de Beauplan remarks that “the Poles have a national dislike to the Russians because of their brutality, and cannot endure the Germans and the Swedes, but that they have a great sympathy with the French, and call them brothers.”

George. The French would not be much flattered by that compliment.

Mrs. M. They had no reason to be ashamed of it. M. de Thou, the French historian, has, in the history of his own time, given an account of the arrival at Paris of the Polish ambassadors, who came to announce to the Duke of Anjou his election to the crown of Poland. He says, “It is impossible to express the general astonishment when we saw these ambassadors in long robes, fur caps,

sabres, arrows, and quivers. But our admiration was excessive when we saw the sumptuousness of their equipages, the scabbards of their swords adorned with jewels, their bridles, saddles, and horsecloths decked in the same way, and the air of consequence and dignity by which they were distinguished. One of the most remarkable circumstances was their facility in expressing themselves in Latin, French, German, and Italian. These four languages were as familiar to them as their own. They spoke our language with so much purity, that one would have taken them rather for men educated on the banks of the Seine and the Loire than the inhabitants of the countries watered by the Vistula or the Dnieper; which put our courtiers to the blush, who knew nothing, but were open enemies to all science; so that when their guests questioned them, they answered only by signs and blushes." The historian goes on to say, that there were found only two noblemen in the whole French court who were able to answer these northern wise men in Latin. So you see that the Poles, after all, were not people to be despised.

George. Truly those conceited French courtiers must have felt somewhat sneaking when they found themselves so inferior to the half-civilized Poles.

Mrs. M. Why certainly ignorance *ought* always to make a gentleman feel, as George says, somewhat sneaking. I therefore hope the more that my two dear sons will always feel the value of knowledge.

Richard. And now, Mamma, will you tell us how the good folks consoled themselves for the loss of their king?

Mrs. M. In the best way possible—namely, by choosing another. It was in vain that Henry sent them conciliatory letters, in which he promised to return after a time. Nothing that he could either say or do could restore their good opinion of him; and on the 15th of July, 1575, he was formally deposed, and the throne declared vacant. Ernest, the Archduke of Austria, was again a candidate for it. The Austrian party in Poland, however, thought that the Emperor Maximilian, his father, would be better able to quell the opposite interests, and therefore elected him in his stead, and he was proclaimed accordingly. But there was also, on the other hand, another party which declared for the princess Anne, sister of Sigismond Augustus, whose hand had been refused by Henry of Valois. Battori hastened to Poland, married the princess, and was also proclaimed. And before the two competitors could decide their pretensions by force of arms, the death of Maximilian averted the civil war which was on the point of ensuing, and, except that the inhabitants of Dantzig stood out till subdued by force, placed Stephen peaceably on the throne.

Stephen Battori had received his education in the camp, and by his good conduct and great abilities had risen from a private station to offices of trust and importance. He had been employed

in some difficult negotiations with the court of Vienna, and acquitted himself so well, that on the death of the prince of Transylvania, the nephew of Sigismund Augustus, he was appointed his successor; and he afterwards showed, by his wise and upright conduct, that he was worthy of the still higher dignity that awaited him. Among other acts of prudence, he is famed for having introduced a degree of military order and discipline into a body of Cossacks who inhabited the islands and swamps at the mouth of the Dnieper, the ancient Borysthenes. Of this people there were several tribes, which spread themselves over the Ukraine and the south of Russia. The name of Cossack is said by some to be derived from a Sclavonian word, signifying goat, and applied to this people either because they clothed themselves with the skins of those animals, or because they lived, like goats, in woods and mountains and forests. As for the mountains, however, of the Cossack tribes, we may, I believe, look for them in vain, the whole country which they inhabit, though abounding in extensive plains, hardly possessing even a hill. Other writers tell us that in the Sclavonian language the word Cossack signifies robber, and that among the Tartars it signifies an armed man. In either sense it might be well applied to a people who, both as robbers by land and pirates at sea, were the terror of all the neighbouring people. They were a hardy and active race, excellent horsemen and warriors, and

able to endure the greatest extremes of heat and of cold, of fatigue and of hunger.

Of these Cossacks Stephen formed six regiments of militia, each commanded by its *hetman* or *attaman*. He also did what he could to civilize them, and bestowed on them the town of Tectemeravia, on the Borysthenes. The Cossacks themselves, though rude in manners, were not insensible to these benefits, and many of them applied industriously to agriculture and to the other arts of civilized life. The oppression with which they were treated a few reigns afterwards alienated them again from their close connexion with Poland; but they are still described by travellers as possessing a singular fidelity of character and simplicity of manners; and the late Dr. Clarke, who, in his tour from Petersburg to the Crimea, passed some time among the Cossacks of Tcherkask, has left us a most agreeable picture of them.

Stephen Battori, after a reign of nearly ten years, died suddenly in 1586, in the midst of preparations for a war with the Swedes in Livonia. He was exceedingly regretted, for, although his temper was passionate, his great abilities, and, above all, his inflexible love of justice, gained him the respect of his subjects. He founded the university of Wilna, and intrusted it to the care of the Jesuits. His death was a real misfortune to Poland, and plunged the country afresh into all the distractions of an election.

George. Nay, my dear Mamma, that surely was no misfortune ; for it seems to me as if the Poles must have enjoyed an election above all things, and the more furiously it was contested the better.

Mrs. M. Why, truly, as you say, they were never averse to a little contention amongst themselves ; nor indeed with anybody else, if we may judge by their perpetual private quarrels and public wars. In the dissensions which ensued on the death of Stephen, two powerful and rival nobles, Zoborowski and Zamoski, took the lead. The chief contest for the crown was between the archduke Maximilian of Austria, and Sigismond, prince of Sweden, who, as you may remember, had twice before presented himself to the electors, and whose claim, as nephew to Sigismond II., and as inheriting through his mother the blood of the Jagellons, weighed very strongly with the people at large. The Austrian interest was vehemently espoused by the Zoborowski faction, while the party of Zamoski enlisted no less fiercely in that of Sigismond. Both he and Maximilian were proclaimed by their respective partisans, and no way remained but to decide the contest by arms. Maximilian was twice defeated, and the last time was taken prisoner by Zamoski, who commanded Sigismond's troops.

The news of Maximilian's captivity caused the greatest consternation at Vienna. The princes of his family talked loudly of taking up arms to procure his release, and to place him on the throne of

Poland by force. The emperor Rodolph, however, having more material affairs to attend to on the side of Turkey, was very solicitous to obtain his brother's liberation by treaty, if possible, and sent to offer that, if released, he should renounce all claim to the crown. But such was the value which he entertained for the title of king, that he offered Sigismund a considerable sum of money to allow his rival to retain the empty name alone. The conduct of Charles V. to Francis I., after the battle of Pavia, had given the monarchs of Europe an example of ungenerous treatment of a captive enemy, which persons were not wanting to advise Sigismund on this occasion to follow, by demanding a large ransom for the archduke. But Sigismund rejected these counsels, saying that he was satisfied with the advantages which Providence had given him over his competitor, and would not add insult to misfortune. "I shall," said he, "give Maximilian his freedom, and not oblige him to buy it." He accordingly set him at liberty, and had him conducted by a Polish guard to the frontiers of the empire, under the stipulation that he should both renounce his claim to the crown and also lay down the title of king.

Richard. This gives me great hopes of this Sigismund, and that he will turn out a fine character.

Mrs. M. He was a mixed character, like most others. Although a grandson of the great Gusta-

vus Vasa, he inherited but few of the fine qualities of his truly noble and illustrious ancestor.

Mary. O, Mamma, I have heard something of that Gustavus Vasa, and George once read me a play about him! But do tell us who he was, and something about him.

Mrs. M. He was the ancestor of three of the Polish sovereigns, and therefore, as we are nearly come to the end of our conversation, I think I may take a leaf out of the history of Sweden, as far as he was concerned in it.

Gustavus Vasa, otherwise called Gustavus Ericson, or the son of Eric, was a noble of the first rank in Sweden, and was descended from some of the early kings of that country. He was born in 1490. His father was governor of Finland, and he himself, when very young, had also borne a high office in the state. No knight of romance, Mary, had ever a series of more moving adventures "in flood, in field," or in forest, than those which are recorded of this hero. In the year 1518, Christiern II., king of Denmark, a barbarous tyrant, who has been surnamed the Northern Nero, invaded Sweden, and though bravely resisted, and indeed repulsed, treacherously carried off six hostages, of whom Gustavus was one. Of Gustavus's imprisonment and escape there is a long account in his history. After his flight, he returned to his country, but found Danish garrisons everywhere, and was constrained

to seek his own safety by concealing himself in a waggon laden with straw, in which he passed unsuspected through the enemy's army, and reached one of his father's castles in Sudermania. While here, he tried to rouse both the nobles and the peasantry to arms, but in vain; and in the following year Christiern completed the conquest of Sweden, and made himself king. Under pretence of punishing those who had signed a sentence of condemnation some years before against the archbishop of Upsal, he, at the commencement of his reign, put most of the principal nobles to death. Amongst these was Eric, the father of Gustavus, and Christiern had hoped to have destroyed Gustavus himself also. Nor were his cruelties confined to the upper classes. He is said to have threatened the peasants that, if they resisted his extortions, he would cut off a hand and a foot, saying that one hand and one foot, with a wooden leg, was enough for a ploughman.

Mary. And poor Gustavus! where was he all this time?

Mrs. M. With a heart bursting with grief, he concealed himself in the mountains of Dalecarlia, and applied himself to work as a labourer in the mines. Here he might have remained concealed, had not the woman in whose house he lodged perceived that the collar of his shirt was embroidered. This circumstance, together with the superiority of his air and manners, gave rise to suspicions, which

at last reached the ears of the lord of the village, who immediately went to the mines to offer his protection to the unfortunate stranger. He no sooner saw him than he recollect ed him, and the more readily, as they had been at the university of Upsal together. He then invited him to his house, and treated him with every kindness. Gustavus endeavoured to prevail on this his kind host to join with him to induce the Dalecarlians to revolt against the Danes. But finding all persuasion in vain, he after a time removed to the house of another person, named Peterson, who received him with the greatest show of respect and friendship, but yet was secretly conspiring all the time to give him up to the Danes, for the sake of the high price which was set on his head. Peterson's wife, however, had a more generous spirit than her husband, and sent Gustavus, under the care of one of her confidential servants, to the house of a neighbouring curate, in time to save him from some Danish soldiers whom her husband had summoned to take him. He was received with the greatest kindness by this good man, who, for the greater security, hid him in a part of the church of which he alone had the key. Here he remained some time, and, to make an end of my long story, the help of this good curate, and the influence which he had with the peasants, enabled Gustavus at length to rouse the Dalecarlians, and by their example the rest of the nation, to throw off the tyrannous yoke of the Danes. In 1523

Gustavus was chosen king. He reigned wisely and happily many years, and died in 1560.

George. And I hope he made a bishop of that curate who had done so much for him, and had befriended him in his adversity?

Mrs. M. He is said to have been very grateful to all who had been his friends at that time. The curate was dead, so that he could not give him a mitre. All he could do for him, therefore, was to place a copper gilt crown on the top of his church, the church of Suverdsio, in Dalecarlia.

Gustavus Vasa had three sons, Eric, John, and Charles. Eric was one of the many suitors to our Queen Elizabeth. John visited England to plead his brother's suit, and was received by that coquettish sovereign with all the honours that her court afforded. Eric was king of Sweden after his father, but became insane, and was succeeded by John, the father of Sigismond, the newly-elected king of Poland. Charles, the third son of Gustavus Vasa, was duke of Sudermania, and inherited a far greater portion than either of his brothers of his father's spirit of enterprise and abilities.

CONVERSATION VIII.

THE KINGS OF THE HOUSE OF VASA.

[Years after Christ, 1586—1632.]

SIGISMOND III.

Mrs. M. THE elevation of Sigismund III. to the throne of Poland was less agreeable to the country he had left than to that to which he came. The Swedes, who looked forward to him as their future monarch, dreaded particularly lest he should be estranged by his residence in Poland from the doctrines of the Reformation; and they dreaded this the more because his mother was become a Roman Catholic. Besides this, also, they were apprehensive that the interests of his native country would be sacrificed to those of the nation by which he had been adopted as king.

On the death of his father in 1592, Sigismund obtained the permission of the diet to visit Sweden, to settle its affairs, and to receive its crown. But he had scarcely set his foot in his native land when he increased all the jealousies of him which the Swedes had before entertained, by desiring that the ceremony of his coronation should be performed by a Roman Catholic bishop, and by showing in other respects also an evident leaning towards the

Church of Rome. It was in vain that his uncle, Duke Charles, urged him to quiet the minds of the people, by promising to preserve inviolate all the rights of the Protestants. He would say nothing on that point, and his silence confirmed the general displeasure. After two years passed in making and in smoothing difficulties, he was, however, in 1594, crowned king of Sweden, and took the coronation oath, which was thus singularly worded:—" This oath I religiously promise and vow to keep to all my subjects, young and old, born or to be born, beloved or not beloved, absent or present, no way infringing, but rather improving the same by royal affection." It proved, however, eventually, that his " royal affection" was more inclined towards the Poles than the Swedes. The Swedes, therefore, soon after his return to Poland, came to the resolution of deposing him; and they at first proposed to elect his son Uladislaus, then about twelve years old, in his place, but on the condition that the boy should be sent to Stockholm, and there educated in the Protestant faith. To this condition Sigismund would not accede, and therefore his Swedish subjects proceeded in 1604 to deprive him formally of the crown, and chose his uncle Charles, the Duke of Sudermania, king in his stead. Sigismund did not sit down quietly under this deprivation of his hereditary rights, and a war ensued between the two countries, which lasted, with occasional intervals of truce, through all the rest of the reign. He engaged in

a war also with Russia, where a pretender had started up and, indeed, possessed himself of the crown, under very singular circumstances, to understand which I must give you some little account of the revolutions which had been taking place in that vast empire.

The Czar Ivan III. had died in 1584, and had left two sons, Feodore and Demetrius. Demetrius, the younger, was then about nine years old, and was placed under the care of his mother in the retired castle of Uglitz. Feodore succeeded to the throne, and was entirely governed by Boris Gudonof, an artful favourite, whose sister Irene he had married. Boris, not content with having been raised to the highest offices of the state, aspired to the throne itself, and to clear his way to it, contrived the assassination, as is said, first of the young Demetrius, and afterwards of Feodore himself. Boris was crowned in 1598; he had reigned some time, and is allowed to have conducted the affairs of the empire with great skill and ability, when a rumour reached him that the prince Demetrius was still alive, and was raising an army in Poland, with which to come and assert his rights. This false Demetrius was a monk named Otrepief, who having been told of some singular personal resemblances between himself and the young prince, was tempted to try the experiment of personating him.

Mary. But how did he account for not having been murdered?

Mrs. M. He pretended that he had been taken

to a place of safety, and that another boy had been murdered in his stead. Otrepief's story gained full belief in Poland, and, from the king to the peasant, all felt an interest in his cause. He also contrived to make a friend of the Pope by promising to transfer the Russians from the Greek to the Romish Church when he should be established on the throne. In spite, moreover, of every precaution taken by Boris to prevent all intercourse with Poland, a manifesto of Demetrius found its way into Russia, and raised a strong party there in his favour. Collecting a small army of Poles and Cossacks, he passed the frontiers, and, though worsted in a first engagement, was successful in a second. He behaved with so much generosity towards the vanquished, that his clemency completed the conquest of the country, and Boris, in a transport of passion, destroyed himself, or, as other writers say, was seized with apoplexy, of which he died suddenly. An attempt was made to place his son on the throne, but this was in vain : Demetrius was acknowledged as the true heir.

Thus, by one of the most extraordinary revolutions in history, was this adventurer placed in the seat of the Czars ; and a skilful policy might, it is thought, have maintained him on it. But instead of applying himself wisely to cultivate the affections of his new subjects, his first care was to show his gratitude to those who had befriended him, by bestowing on the Polish nobles some of the forfeited

estates of the Russian nobility. By these acts, and by the desire which he showed to interfere with their religion, he soon excited much dissatisfaction among the Russians, who also began to discover reasons why he could not be, as he pretended, the son of Ivan. Amongst other things, they objected to his manner of riding.

Richard. I suppose they were like the French, who quizzed poor Louis XVIII. because *he* could not ride.

Mrs. M. On the contrary, the Russians found fault with Demetrius because he rode too well, and because, instead of being helped on horseback by his attendants, and then *progressing*, as I suppose we must call it, at a slow, dignified pace, as was the custom of former Czars, he would vault on his steed without assistance, and gallop off like a Cos-sack. These discontents gathered strength, and at last an attack was made on the palace. Demetrius attempted to escape, but fell and was taken, and was immediately put to death. Two thousand Poles were massacred, and a Russian noble, named Swiski, the leader of the commotion, and a distant relation of the imperial family, was declared Czar. In the midst of these tumults another person appeared, calling himself Demetrius, and affirming that he had escaped with some of his guards from the attack of the palace ; and thus to the false Demetrius succeeded a falser.

In the midst of these dissensions, Sigismond,

under pretence of revenging the death of the massacred Poles, and in the hope of elevating his son Uladislaus to the throne of Russia, entered the country with a numerous army. The Russians, seized with a panic, deposed Swiski, and proclaimed this young prince as their Czar. But before he could assume the sovereignty, a counter-revolution took place; and Michael Romanof Feodorovitch was finally elevated to the imperial seat. From him is descended the present royal family of Russia; and it is remarkable that, with the exception of the interval between the death of Feodore and the elevation of Romanof, that extensive empire has, from the time of its foundation, been governed by only two dynasties. Ruric, who was its founder in or about the year 860, was the direct ancestor of Feodore; and, indeed, Romanof too, by his mother's side, was of the same race.

Sigismund, though he was obliged to resign the hope of making his son Czar, contrived to gain and retain possession of the Russian provinces of Severia and Novogorod. He was afterwards engaged in a bloody war with the Turks. This war was partly kindled by the usurpations of Bethlem Gabor, whom I think you have heard of, a man who had raised himself from a private station to be almost the absolute master of Transylvania.

George. Is he the same who is mentioned in the novel of St. Leon as being so very ferocious and so very ugly?

Mrs. M. I believe that the novelist has done him no injustice in these respects; and all accounts unite also in inveighing against his artfulness and treachery. He lived in a continued storm of his own raising, and yet died peaceably in his bed. The most memorable exploit of this war of Sigismond with the Turks was that performed by General Zolkiewski, the account of whose retreat with 5000 Poles in the face of an overwhelming superiority of the enemy has been compared to Xenophon's history of the retreat of the 10,000 Greeks, and deserves to be given at some length.

Sigismond, having been importuned for assistance by the vaivode of Moldavia, sent Zolkiewski with a body of Poles and Cossacks into that province, where he supposed the vaivode himself to be still at the head of a considerable force of his own. But Zolkiewski, on his arrival, found the Turks already in possession of the province, and the vaivode was so far from being able to add any strength to the Polish army, that he was glad to fly to it himself for protection. The Turkish force amounted to 70,000 men, the flower of the Ottoman empire, while that of Zolkiewski was only 20,000, and these principally Cossacks, who, though good soldiers in an onset or a pursuit, were yet, from their inaptitude to obedience and their love of plunder, not to be depended on like regular troops. However, notwithstanding these disadvantages, the general determined to maintain his ground if he could;

and inadequate as his force was, he contrived to keep the enemy in perpetual annoyance by harassing their outposts and cutting off their convoys; and at the same time he placed himself in such secure positions as to avoid coming to an engagement. When at last this was no longer possible, he chose so advantageous a ground as to be able to sustain himself for a whole day against the united strength of the Turks. After darkness had put an end to the combat, the Turkish commander sent emissaries into the Polish camp, who, I am sorry to say, effected by bribes what he had not been able to gain by arms; and when morning came, Zolkiewski found himself deserted by the greater part of his army. Five thousand men, however, still remained faithful, and with these, though he could no longer renew the fight, he yet disdained to yield, and, breaking up his camp, began his retreat. He knew that as soon as he could cross the Dniester, he should be out of the enemy's reach. He therefore formed his little army into a square, and when he halted, surrounded himself with a movable entrenchment composed of his ammunition and baggage waggons. Thus he commenced his march, and kept pushing forwards, notwithstanding all the difficulties opposed by the enemy, who were constantly employed in breaking up the roads, blocking up the passes, and throwing every impediment in his way. In the night he made forced marches, which left his pursuers far

behind; and his movements were often so rapid, and his route so skilfully chosen, as to leave them at a loss which way he had gone. At last, on the eighth day, he came in sight of the river, which was to be his barrier from danger and from farther pursuit. A part of the troops was immediately set to work to prepare boats for the passage, and another part was sent to forage for provisions. These fell into some panic; the alarm spread to the little camp, and the men who had braved so many real dangers, and opposed themselves over and over again to a host of enemies, now deserting their general, ran like a terrified flock of sheep in all directions.

Mary. I suppose that, thinking all their dangers over, they had left off being courageous.

Mrs. M. Probably their minds as well as their bodies were exhausted by the great fatigues which they had gone through. Whatever the cause, they were, in the very moment when they had reached a place of safety, dispersed by their own terrors, and cut off by straggling parties of the enemy. Zolkiewski, left almost alone, and dispirited by astonishment and sorrow, yet fought as long as it was possible to make resistance, and fell over-powered by numbers. His head was cut off and sent to Constantinople.

In 1622, the sultan, who considered the glorious retreat of this handful of men as an affront to the Turkish arms, took the field in person, with an

army of 300,000 men, as if he intended to sweep the Poles from the very face of the earth. But though Zolkiewski was no more, the cause of Poland was in good hands in those of Cholkiewitz. The struggle was perilous. Cholkiewitz died of a disorder contracted from fatigue and anxiety, and the command of the Polish army was then given to a General Lubomirski, by whom the Turks were repulsed with the loss of 60,000 men ; and an advantageous treaty was afterwards concluded with them.

Mary. Ah, Mamma, those names are the worst part of this history ! I shall never remember them.

Mrs. M. About this time, but I do not know the year, the king of Poland had a narrow escape from assassination. As he was one day entering the vestibule of the great church at Warsaw, a nobleman named Piecharski suddenly struck at him with a small battle-axe, and wounded him in the cheek, and again in the shoulder. Sigismund instantly fell, and the guards and attendants being behind, the only person who saw the blow given was an Italian musician belonging to the choir, who called out in great agitation, in his own language, “ Il traditore, Il traditore ! ” The by-standers, who knew nothing of what had happened, so rapidly did it all pass, imagined that he said, “ The Tartars, the Tartars,” and supposing that a troop of these rough riders was at hand, rushed out of the church in the greatest disorder. The king, meantime,

whose wounds were not serious, was taken care of by his attendants, and the assassin, who appears to have been at least partially insane, was apprehended.

Sigismond, as he grew older, paid less attention to the affairs of his government, and devoted great part of his time to music, and also to chemistry. The war with Sweden, as I have already told you, lasted, though with some intervals of truce, during almost the whole of the reign. This war presents, however, no very memorable details, and was carried on but languidly on the part of Poland. Charles IX. of Sweden had been succeeded in 1611 by his son of glorious memory, Gustavus Adolphus; and it seems as if Sigismond, despising the inexperience of his youthful antagonist, did not take into account those extraordinary powers, and that untiring activity of body and mind, which made him a match for the most potent sovereigns in Europe.

George. Was he the Lion of the North?

Mary. The Lion of the North! I do not understand you, George.

George. That is because you have not read Sir Walter Scott's story of the Legend of Montrose. If you had, you would have known all about the great Gustavus, and his ritt-master Captain Dalgetty.

Mrs. M. Whatever we may think or say of Captain Dalgetty, Gustavus was as genuine a hero in real history as he can be in romance, and was re-

garded by all the Protestants of the north as the champion of their faith. But I must not here enter into *his* history. Sigismond at last made a six years' truce with him, and afterwards sank into a profound melancholy, and died in 1632, after a harassed reign of forty-six years. Sigismond III. was twice married, and left two sons. Uladislaus, his successor, was his son by his first wife, and John Casimir by his second. Casimir's mother had always behaved very unkindly to Uladislaus, and did all in her power to prevail on her own son to endeavour to supplant him; but Casimir was of a generous nature, and had a true affection for his brother, and would not lend himself to his mother's schemes.

Sigismond, who had never relinquished the hope of one day regaining the throne of Sweden, and had still retained the regalia, placed the crown with his dying hand on the head of Uladislaus. The crown of Poland was at the disposal of the Diet.

CONVERSATION IX.

THE HOUSE OF VASA—(*continued*).

[Years after Christ, 1632—1668.]

ULADISLAUS VI.—JOHN II. (CASIMIR).

Mrs. M. THE diet met on the 27th of September, 1632, and but little objection was made to electing Uladislaus. The Lutheran party, however, for a time delayed the proceedings, in the hope that Gustavus Adolphus, who had now been victorious in thirty engagements over the greatest generals in Europe, might be prevailed on to add the crown of Poland to his laurel wreath. But Gustavus was killed in the battle of Lutzen, on the 6th of November of the same year, in the arms of victory; and indeed, while he lived, he showed no desire to exchange the career of glory in which he was engaged for the business of canvassing. Consequently the Poles were obliged to be satisfied with Uladislaus, who was declared king Nov. 13. We have an account of the ceremony of the coronation of Uladislaus, from the same French officer, the Sieur de Beauplan, whom I have before mentioned to you, who was an eye-witness of it, and a captain

of Polish artillery in this reign. “The place of election,” says our author, “is half a league from Warsaw towards Dantzig, where there was a small enclosure of about a thousand paces in compass, enclosed by a pitiful ditch. In the enclosure were two great tents, one for the electors where the senators sit, and the other where the deputies of the provinces meet to confer together, before they go into the great audience of the senate. A fortnight was spent in the election of King Uladislaus, during which time there were no less than eighty thousand horsemen all about that little enclosure; soldiers following the senators, for every one of them had a little army, some greater, some less. The palatine of Cracow had seven thousand men, and so others according to their power; for every one is attended by his friends and subjects, in the best condition he can, being well disciplined, and with a resolution to fight in case they cannot agree. For, during the time of the election, all the nobility was upon its guard, every one with his foot in the stirrup, ready to mount upon the least disagreement, to fall on those who should attempt to infringe their liberties. When the election had at last come to a decision, they did not make it public till the next day, when they assembled with all their retinue, and bearing the standard of the crown, proclaimed prince Uladislaus king, amidst a discharge of cannon and small arms, repeating three several times, ‘ Long live the king.’ ”

Richard. It really must have been a very fine sight to have seen all the flower of the whole Polish nation thus assembled !

Mrs. M. The chief senators then went to a neighbouring village, where the prince was waiting, and the ceremony of offering him the crown, and his acceptance of it being gone through, they conducted him to the great church at Warsaw, where he took the required oaths before the altar.

The reign of Uladislaus VI., like that of his father Sigismund, was a troubled reign. The Russians, in the hope to regain their lost provinces, advanced towards Smolensko, and laid siege to that town. But Uladislaus compelled them to raise the siege and retreat, and afterwards to accept of a peace. He also defeated the Turks, who had taken advantage of the attack on Poland by the Russians to break the truce which they had made with Sigismund. The war with Sweden was also renewed, but did not last long, a truce being agreed upon with that country for twenty-nine years, a prodigiously long time for two such warlike and restless nations to keep the peace.

George. And we shall see how they kept it. I dare say they soon fell to blows again.

Mrs. M. As for Uladislaus, he wished for nothing so much as to keep quiet with his enemies, his allies, the Cossacks, giving him sufficient occupation for the rest of his life. These people were of too free and independent a character to sub-

mit to much real control, even from the state of which they acknowledged the sovereignty ; and though their hardness and bravery and activity made them useful auxiliaries in time of war, they were apt to be very inconvenient neighbours in time of peace. The Polish nobles, in particular, were perpetually feeling themselves aggrieved by the Cossacks, on account of their affording a refuge to the fugitive peasants or serfs of Poland, who were, as you know, mere slaves of the soil, and who sometimes deserted into the Ukraine in such great numbers as to leave their lords' estates without hands enough to carry on cultivation. Irritated on this account, the Polish nobles made several attempts to subdue the Cossacks themselves, and to put them on the same footing with their own peasants. But these attempts were vain, and they then made a treaty of amnesty with them, and promised to withdraw the forces they had sent to invade their territory. But at the same time, the diet, with the grossest breach of faith, passed a decree which revoked all the privileges which Battoni had granted them. To enforce this decree, the diet sent an army into the Ukraine for the purpose of destroying the fortress of Techtemeravia. But the Cossacks defended this their "treasure-house," as they called it, with the greatest vigour ; and the Poles, finding that they could not prevail against them, then agreed to a second amnesty. The Cossacks, to show their own good faith and confidence,

threw down their arms, and returned each man to his home. But they were no sooner disbanded than the Poles, with a renewed treachery, sent to seize on their fugitive serfs, who had been the original cause of the quarrel. They also committed other excesses, which drove the Cossacks to fury. The torch of discord was again lighted up. A Lithuanian, named Kzmielniski, who had settled in the Ukraine, and had been treated with outrage and injustice by the Polish governor of a fortress in his neighbourhood, took the command of the Cossacks, glad to revenge at once their injuries and his own. At this moment, when war was ready to burst forth with every circumstance of rage and cruelty, Uladislaus was rescued by death from beholding its miseries. He died of a malignant fever in 1648, having reigned sixteen years. He was a man whose general character was good, and he is supposed, in this mad warfare with the Cossacks, rather to have erred by not opposing with sufficient determination the reckless violence of the nobles, than to have plunged in it willingly.

A miserable interregnum now ensued. The Cossacks and the Tartars, hitherto implacable enemies, became united by their mutual hatred to Poland, and carried war and rapine into the very heart of the country. Every province through which these infuriate marauders passed was desolated by them, and in many places the nobles were massacred, and the peasants stripped of every thing

they possessed, and turned naked into the woods and forests to perish by cold and hunger. The diet was on the point of removing to Dantzic, as the only remaining place of security, when the country was unexpectedly saved by the breaking out of a quarrel among its enemies. The Cossacks, after gaining a victory over the Poles, had found an immense booty in their camp ; and the Tartars, though they had not shared in the battle, were not slack in putting in their claim to a share in the spoil. To this demand the Cossacks were by no means willing to yield, and fearing lest their fierce companions would use force to help themselves, they hastened back to secure their prey in the safe fastnesses of the Ukraine. Because *they* went home, so also did the Tartars, and thus was Poland freed from a most imminent danger, and the diet left at liberty to proceed to the election of a king in the place of Uladislaus.

Desolated as the country was, Poland still seemed a prize worth trying for ; and the Czar of Muscovy and Ragotski, prince of Transylvania, appeared as candidates for the vacant crown. Ragotski attempted to support his claim by an army of 30,000 men, which he declared it was his intention to turn against the Cossacks if he were elected, or against Poland if he were not elected. This bribe, or this menace, whichever it might be considered, had no influence over the electors, who chose John Casimir. Casimir had, some time before, become a member

of the order of Jesuits—an order exceedingly unpopular in Poland. The pope, however, hoped to qualify this disadvantage by making him a cardinal; and thus, with his head doubly adorned with a crown and a cardinal's hat, John Casimir began his reign Nov. 20, 1648.

The first act of the new king was to express his disapprobation of the conduct which had been pursued towards the Cossacks; and he assured his nobles that a war begun on such principles could never come to a happy issue. But this remonstrance had no effect on a set of arrogant men, to soften their animosity against a wild and almost independent nation of horsemen, whose country afforded a harbour to their runaway serfs. The nobles, therefore, raised an army independent of the crown, and marched into the Ukraine, where they sustained a signal defeat, and were reduced to the last extremities. The king came to their relief, and the Cossacks found that though they had in Casimir a friend who would advocate their cause, they had also a superior who could make them feel his power. The king's object, however, was to conciliate, not to subdue; and he willingly made peace with them, and consented to an act of indemnity. But these people, having tried their strength, were no longer inclined for peace than till they could meet with an opportunity for war. In 1653, they and their Tartar friends joined with the Russians, and attacked, in different places, nearly the whole

of the eastern frontier of Poland at once. Sweden, too, took the field against Poland. Charles Gustavus was raised to the throne of that country in 1654, on the abdication of Christina, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus. This monarch, if not as great a hero as Gustavus Adolphus, was at least quite as formidable to Poland, and harboured no less a project than its entire conquest. He was joined also by many of the Polish nobles, who had never forgiven their sovereign his interference in their affair with the Cossacks. The king of Sweden entered Poland. Casimir, who had no resources either of money or men, took refuge in Silesia; and, with the exception of the town of Dantzig, which alone stood out against the conqueror, the Poles, who considered their king's retreat as an abdication, submitted to the Swedish monarch, and began to deliberate on offering him the crown. Charles, believing that his conquest was now complete, levied a hearth-tax and other taxes on the Poles, and retraced his steps towards Prussia. But the stupor which this rapid invasion had occasioned in Poland did not last long: both nobles and people felt the disgrace of being made tributary to Sweden, and invited Casimir to return, and vied with each other in expressions of loyalty to him. The Polish forces were collected, and some important victories obtained over the Swedes, and the city of Warsaw regained. But unhappily this success was sullied by a breach of

faith in making the Swedish garrison prisoners of war, contrary to the express conditions of the capitulation. Charles immediately hastened back to Warsaw, breathing fierce resentment against this perfidy. The two armies met under the walls of the city, and the Poles, determined to retrieve their martial character, fought with the most desperate courage. The battle lasted three days. At last the Poles yielded ; Warsaw fell again into the hands of the Swedes ; and the victor, regarding the inhabitants as traitors, gave it up to be pillaged. From this formidable enemy, however, Casimir was relieved by the death of Charles Gustavus, in 1660. Charles XI., his successor, was left a child, and placed under the care of a regency, and a peace, called the peace of Oliva, was made between the two countries, by the articles of which Sweden restored almost all she had won from Poland, and Poland ceded to Sweden almost the whole of Livonia. Casimir resigned, moreover, all claim on the crown of Sweden, a claim to which both his father and his brother had pertinaciously clung, and which had cost Poland very dear. During these transactions with Sweden, Poland was invaded also by the Transylvanian prince Ragotski, who tried with his 30,000 men to fight his way to the crown, but met with so rough a reception that he was obliged to retreat. He died soon afterwards.

Mary. Well, Mamma, and lovers of fighting as

the Poles always were, I think that now they must have been glad to have peace.

Mrs. M. And yet scarcely was the country free from its foreign enemies, than a civil war broke out in Poland itself. The king had taken some German troops into his pay, and the nobles insisted on their dismissal. An appeal was made to arms, and the king's troops were defeated. Casimir, disgusted with the conduct of the nobles, and wearied by the cares of his station, resigned the crown in 1668, and retired into France. Some writers say that he had long meditated on this step, and had secretly remitted a great deal of gold and silver from Poland, in order to secure to himself a competent provision in his intended retirement. Others assert that this was one of the many calumnies against him invented by the nobles, who could not forgive his attempts to curb their inordinate pride, and check their power. At the time when he resigned the crown, he convened the diet, and standing on the steps of the throne, made a speech, which I give you as I find it:—

“ People of Poland,—It is now two hundred and eighty years that you have been governed by my family. The reign of my ancestors is passed, and mine is going to expire. Fatigued with the labours of war, the cares of the cabinet, and the weight of age, oppressed with the burdens and solicitude of a reign of more than twenty-one years, I, your king and father, return into your hands a crown, and

choose for my throne six feet of earth, where I shall sleep in peace with my fathers." He concluded by begging pardon of any one whom he might have offended, as from his heart he forgave all who had ever offended him. He retired into France, where he was made abbot of the monastery of St. Germain des Pres, and died about five years after his abdication. The first trace which we have of the exereise of the power of the *liberum veto*, of which I spoke to you in my first chapter, was in this reign, in the year 1652, when, during a very important debate, a deputy named Sisinski called out, "I stop the proceedings." The assembly was thrown into great confusion, but the majority supported this protest, and the veto became the law.

Mary. Poor Casimir! I think that the nobles must at last have become ashamed of themselves for having driven that good-hearted king away.

Mrs. M. The Polish nobles had reached an intolerable degree of pride, and were alike the tyrants of the king and the peasants. Their privileges were boundless, and their numbers so great, that it was calculated that in one of the provinces (that of Masovia) a sixth part of the inhabitants were noble.

Richard. And as they behaved so ill both to the king and the peasants, I suppose they must have behaved equally ill to one another.

Mrs. M. I don't know that that follows. They were very quarrelsome and vindictive, but soon made their quarrels up again. They were also very

hospitable and social, and spent their time alternately in feasting and fighting. When they had a private quarrel, instead of revenging themselves by duels, they assembled their friends and vassals, and set together all hands to have their fight out pell-mell, unless some peace-maker persuaded them to drink each other's healths instead. The most surprising thing to me is, how they could fight at all, so loaded as they were with accoutrements. M. de Beauplan has given us a description of one of his fellow-officers. "In the first place," says he, "he had on his coat of mail, with a scimitar over it; a steel cap with labels hanging down on each side; on his back a carbine, or else his bow and quiver; about his waist he had an awl, a knife, a steel to sharpen his weapons and to strike fire with, six silver spoons in a leather bag, a pistol stuck in his girdle, a fine handkerchief, a leathern bag that folded up, and was used as a vessel to take up water to drink, when in the field. Besides all these things, he had a large, flat pouch, containing his combs, his money, and his papers; two or three fathoms of silk rope to bind the prisoners he might make: all these things were attached to his person. On his saddle he carried a horn to drench his horse with, three leather fetters to hold him with while he ate his food, and a large wooden bowl to give him his drink in. This was the set out of what you may call a heavy horseman; the lancers, being light troops, had fewer and lighter accoutrements. They

were armed with a scimitar and two swords, one a short one, and the other a long one for killing an enemy as he lay on the ground."

Mary. Ah, Mamma, that people should be found to set their wits to work to invent all those different ways of killing one another !

George. But you did not tell us, Mamma, why these light troops were called lancers.

Mrs. M. I was going to tell you that they carried lances nineteen feet long, at the end of which hung a streamer four or five ells long, made of cloth of two colours, the intention of which, as M. de Beauplan conjectures, was to frighten the horses of the enemy.

Richard. And now, Mamma, you have told us something about their fighting, will you tell us about their feasting ?

Mrs. M. Our artillery officer has given us an account of a Polish entertainment, which you shall have in his own words, a little abridged. I will begin with saying, however, that our friend complains very much of the cookery, and above all, of the absence of soup, which was never seen at the Polish tables. He complains also that they had only four sorts of sauce, which were served up with all kinds of meat. The one sort was yellow, and seasoned with saffron ; another red, and made of the juice of cherries ; the third a black sauce, made with prunes ; and the fourth a greyish sauce, of boiled onions. He adds that the greatest of the

Polish dainties are inferior to the meanest of the French dishes, and that he would gladly make the exchange of ten for one. The crowds at the Polish feasts, he tells us, were quite overwhelming. Each person came with ten or fifteen gentlemen followers, who were all made welcome, and seated at a table perhaps a hundred feet long, and covered with three large and fine table-cloths one over another. A plate was set for each person, with a loaf of bread, a napkin, and a spoon (every one bringing his own knife). At one end of the hall was a side-board covered with gilt plate, and railed about, so that no one but the butler and his assistants could have access within the rails. The quantity of plate was often prodigious. "There would often be eight or ten piles of silver dishes the height of a man, and they are no short ones in that country." At the opposite end of the hall was a music gallery. All being ready, the guests were led into the hall, in the middle of which stood four gentlemen, one holding a large silver basin, another a silver ewer, and the two others with a towel three ells long, one holding each end. The ceremony of washing and wiping the hands being gone through, each took his place, and the dishes were handed round. When the guest had eaten what he chose, the custom was for him to fill his dirty plate as full as he could from the dishes within his reach, and give it to his servant, who stood behind him. The servants would then go with their piled-up plates, and huddle together

in a corner, and eat, and talk, and be as merry as their masters. The first course, if I understand the Sieur rightly, consisted of boiled meats; and when, between masters and men, all was eaten up, the empty dishes and the uppermost of the table-cloths were removed, as is not unusual with us, the second course made its appearance. This course consisted of roast meats, salads, and millet and barley, dressed in different ways. Bacon was also brought cut into lumps, which the company swallowed whole, and seemed much to relish; and then there was a finale of little buck-wheat cakes dipped in white poppy juice to promote sleep, and to fill up all the crannies which might remain. This course being cleared away, the empty dishes and the second cloth were removed, and the dessert was set on the table. And now the business of eating being over, the still more important business of drinking began; and it is further said that in the due execution of this business the Poles surpassed most other nations of the world, and that the chief expense of their feasts was in the quantity and richness of the wines produced at them.

CONVERSATION X.

[Years after Christ, 1668—1696.]

MICHAEL.—JOHN III. (SOBIESKI).

Mrs. M. DURING the interregnum which followed the abdication of Casimir, Poland was in a state of continued anarchy. The primate, indeed, as was always the case on these occasions, had the ostensible rule; but there was little use in the name of ruler, when none were willing to obey. There was no descendant of the Polish branch of the house of Vasa, to whom the choice of the people could be directed, and the struggle for the crown which ensued was long and violent. Four candidates declared themselves; the son of the czar of Muscovy, the duke of Neuberg, prince Charles of Lorraine, and the prince of Condé. The national prejudice against Russians and Germans operated against the two former of these princes. The two latter were men, either of whom the Poles might have been proud to call their king. The prince of Lorraine was a general in the emperor's service, and had fought with distinction against Louis XIV., who used to call him "the wisest and most generous of his enemies." The other of these princes was the "great" Condé.

But neither of these candidates prevailed. At a moment when the contest was raging most furiously, one of the palatines proposed to choose a *Piast*. "Are there none," he said, "of the members of the republic worthy of being raised to the supreme dignity? Can we, without acknowledging our own demerit, seek for kings among foreigners, which is, in other words, telling the whole world that Poland has not a subject who deserves being raised to a throne?" This argument suited the multitude, and suited no less also the views of some of the more ambitious palatines, who hoped that the choice might fall on themselves. It did not fall, however, on any of the ambitious, but on Michael Koribut Wiesnowiski, a man descended from one of the brothers of Jagello, but reduced to a state of great poverty and distress. He was also weakly and deformed, and had shut himself up in a monastery in Warsaw, for the sake of peace and quietness. At first he would scarcely believe that the choice of the electors had fallen on him, and when at last he found that this was, as we should say, but too true, he urged his utter incapacity for government, and with tears in his eyes besought that he might be left in his tranquil obscurity. But the Poles were not people to be turned from their purpose by tears and entreaties. Poor Michael was dragged to the throne with as much reluctance as a victim to the scaffold, and was absolutely placed on it by force. This election was not a greater sur-

prise to the king than to most of his subjects, and when Casimir heard of it, he could not conceal his astonishment. "What," said he, "have they set the crown on the head of that poor fellow!"

Mary. And what could they mean by choosing such a king as this Michael, and against his will too?

Mrs. M. The celebrated Sobieski, who was already one of the most distinguished men in Poland, is said to have promoted the election of Michael, in the expectation of making him a stepping-stone for himself, as indeed he proved to be.

The new king had formerly been a gentleman of the bedchamber to the Emperor Ferdinand III.; and as it was now incumbent on him to choose a queen, he sought and obtained the hand of Eleanor, the Emperor's daughter. This alliance did not please the diet, who were not content for their kings to marry without asking their leave. And yet, considering that they had raised him to the throne against his will, it was rather unreasonable that they should object to his pleasing himself in this matter at least. However, there were soon more important things to attend to. The Czar and the Sultan, aided by large bodies of Tartars and Cos-sacks, made common cause against Poland, and besieged Kaminiec, the capital of Podolia, a town situate on the Dniester, and said to have been the only well-fortified place on the Polish frontier. The siege had lasted only ten days, when the gar-

rison, for want of supplies, were obliged to surrender; and Michael, who had scarcely had time to turn himself on his throne, was accused by the senate of having caused this disaster by neglecting to send the necessary succours to relieve the place. Thus at once blamed by his subjects and beset by the Turks, he made an attempt to get out of his difficulties by patching up a peace with the latter, by which he ceded Podolia to the Cossacks, and engaged to pay an annual tribute of 22,000 ducats to the Sultan. But an ignominious treaty like this only made bad matters worse. In 1673, on the ground that the tribute had not been paid, the Sultan renewed the war. The Turkish general, we are told, amongst other military preparations, provided himself with chains for the king of Poland and the lords of his court. But before he had an opportunity of putting them on, he was met and totally routed by Sobieski, near Choczim, a town of Moldavia, in a battle that was renewed day after day for three days. The king did not survive to hear of this good fortune. Though only thirty-five years of age, he was worn out by care of mind and infirmity of body, and died on the 10th of November, 1673, on the eve of the battle. Sobieski now stood at the summit of renown, both for his military talents and for his personal bravery. The crown, the long-cherished object of his secret ambition, was within his reach; and after the usual

cabals and violence of the interregnum which followed the death of Michael, he was elected king of Poland, May 19, 1674.

This great hero was sprung from one of the noblest families of the country. His father was a man of high reputation, and his mother was granddaughter of Zolkiewski. He had been carefully educated, and had visited foreign countries, and amongst these both France and England. John Casimir had much valued him, and had raised him to the highest ranks in the army. His elevation to the throne was opposed by the queen dowager, who used many unworthy arts to obtain it for Prince Charles of Lorraine, whom she afterwards married. But Sobieski had too great a mind to retain any enmity towards her; and one of his first acts was to secure to her an unusually ample revenue, while, to make up for this appropriation of the public money, he paid the arrears then due to the army out of his private funds. Yet, as there is perhaps no hero recorded in history of more gallant character and exploits, so there is none whose public glories are more painfully balanced by private and domestic enmities and inquietudes. Early in life (it was at the election of John Casimir) he had wounded a Lithuanian nobleman named Pacz in a duel. Pacz never forgave either the affront or the wound, and pursued him with a spirit of revenge through all the rest of his life. The cup of prosperity was also tinctured with another root of bitterness in the meddling and

grasping temper of his wife. She was a French-woman, and possessed, in an unusual degree, the interfering spirit of her countrywomen. She was extremely beautiful, and had such insinuating manners and so much art, that she contrived to govern both the king and the kingdom.

The first business of the new king was, of course, to prepare for a renewal of the war with the Turks, against whom he seemed to fight as in a personal quarrel, on account of a brother who had fallen in battle with them ; and his very name carried terror into their ranks. But the pospolite, though summoned in the month of June, could not be got together till November, by which time the winter was set in ; and before the soldiers had been long in arms, the greater part of them complained of the rigour of the season, and returned to their homes.

George. Why, what was come to our friends ? I thought that to a Pole fighting itself was better than sunshine !

Mrs. M. They were out of humour ; and even we English, when we are out of humour, will quarrel with what we like best. They thought that the king's motive to this war with the Turks was merely to gratify his own passion for glory ; and some among the superior nobles are also said to have been displeased with him for leading his army in person, and so preoccupying the post of general, which they thought should have been given to one

of themselves. In spite, however, of this unpopularity of the war, and of all other impediments which he had to contend with, Sobieski continued to perform wonders against the Turks. He had resolved never to rest till he should compel them to give up the tribute, that disgraceful yoke of bondage which they had extorted from Michael; and at last, in 1676, after defeating a host of Turks in four successive days of hard fighting, he forced the Sultan to a treaty, by which he not only relinquished the tribute, but also restored all his conquests from Poland except Kaminiec. On this conclusion of the war, or perhaps in the interval before the last campaign, he returned to Warsaw, in order to be present at three great solemnities. These were his own coronation, and the funeral of the late king and that of John Casimir, who had died at Nevers in France, in 1672, and whose remains had been brought to Poland for interment.

Mary. But how came it that that Michael, with the strange name, had not been buried before?

Mrs. M. It was the Polish custom always to defer the funeral of the dead king till the eve of the coronation of his successor.

Richard. That, I suppose, was to remind the new king of the uncertainty of life—a sort of *memento mori*.

Mrs. M. I am afraid that the practice did not arise out of any such religious or moral intention. It rather sprung from its being a point of honour

among the Poles that their republic should never be without a king ; and therefore the defunct monarch was always to be kept above ground till the new one should be crowned.

From this time Poland enjoyed some years of cessation from foreign war—I was going to say some years of repose, but that blessing the turbulent temper of the people prevented them from enjoying. Sobieski, during this interval, employed himself in putting the military affairs of the state on a better footing, and in retrenching the public expenditure. But nothing that he did could satisfy his subjects, who looked with an evil eye on all his actions, and accused him of saving the public money to fill his private purse. Nor was it till the renewal of the war with Turkey in 1683, when he raised and maintained considerable bodies of troops at his own expense, that they did him justice in this particular.

This war, one of the most memorable of those in which the Christian powers have ever been engaged against the Mahometans, took its rise in a revolt among the Hungarians, who, driven to desperation by the tyranny and oppressions of the emperor Leopold, had revolted, and called on the Turks for assistance. The Turks, always ready enough to make war on Christendom, gladly obeyed the call ; and Leopold, on his side, sought and concluded a treaty with Sobieski, who engaged to take the field in person against the infidels, and also to march to

the relief of Vienna, if that capital should be besieged, as the great preparations of the enemy gave ground to expect. It was not without more difficulty than you would suppose that either the Poles or Sobieski himself were prevailed on to enter into this close alliance with Austria, or to make a breach with the Turks; but the influence of the queen, whom the Emperor had gained over to his side, the warlike temper of the people, and of the king especially, and a just apprehension of the danger to which Poland, and indeed all Christian Europe might be exposed, if the Emperor should be altogether overthrown in this perilous contest, decided the point.

The danger to Vienna itself had not been exaggerated. The Turkish army, marching through Hungary, came down directly on that city, and commenced the siege with an overwhelming force on the 14th of July in this year. Leopold, who seems to have been a most contemptible mixture of cowardice and pride, fled to Lintz with the greatest precipitation. He had intrusted the command of the imperial army to Prince Charles of Lorraine, and made Count Staremburg governor of Vienna, with a garrison of 11,000 men. He wrote pressing letters also to Sobieski, in which he entreated him to come to his assistance without delay. "It is not," he said, "your troops, Sire, that we expect, but your majesty's own presence, being persuaded that if your royal presence will vouchsafe to appear

at the head of our forces, though less numerous than those of the enemy, your name alone, which is so justly dreaded by them, will make their defeat certain."

In answer to these solicitations, Sobieski commenced his march as soon as he could, leaving Cracow on this expedition on the 15th of August. He was at this time fifty-four years old, and so enfeebled by ill health, the consequence of severe wounds and of fatigues in war, that he was obliged to be lifted on his horse. But when once on horseback, he forgot his weakness, and was as much a warrior as ever. He reached Allebrun, where he formed a junction with Prince Charles of Lorraine, in the first week in September.

Vienna had now been besieged during several weeks, and a considerable breach had been made in the walls. Sixty thousand of the citizens had followed the example of their emperor, and fled at the first rumour of the enemy's approach. Those who remained, together with the professors and students of the university, lent their willing aid for the defence of the place. But it was now feared that it could not hold out many days against the incessant battering of the Turks. On the north the city was protected by the Danube, and on the other three sides by tolerable fortifications. On the south is a plain of about three leagues in extent; and there the Turkish army, consisting of about 200,000 men, commanded by the grand

vizier Kara Mustapha, was encamped. This grand vizier might have been introduced into the work entitled “Men with One Idea,” for he had but one. This his one idea was the taking of Vienna; and he was so totally engrossed by it, that he saw nothing to the right or the left, and suffered Prince Charles to build a bridge across the Danube at Tulln for the passage of the imperial army, and took no measures to intercept the Polish army till it had almost reached his quarters.

George. But if he was so set upon his one idea, why did he not, with his 200,000 men, take the city at one blow, instead of sitting down to cannonade it so long?

Mrs. M. The reason is said to be that *number one* was the centre round which Kara Mustapha's one idea revolved. He reflected that if the town were taken by assault, it would be given up to pillage, and every soldier would have a right, at least such a right as the laws of war can give, to as much plunder as he could carry off. If, on the other hand, he could reduce the place to surrender on conditions, he calculated on securing a large share of the spoil to himself. This appears to have been the motive which acted on him, and the consequence was, that he gave Sobieski time to come up with Prince Charles. These two great men, once rivals for a crown, set out together for Vienna on the 9th of September, and had a fatiguing march across mountains, over which they could with diffi-

culty drag their artillery. Indeed, the Germans gave up the attempt; but the Poles succeeded in transporting twenty-eight pieces, which was all they had to oppose to the 300 cannon of the enemy. When they reached the top of the last eminence, Mount Cahlemburg, they came in sight at once of the city and of the Turkish camp, and made three fires as a signal to the worn-out garrison that succour was at hand. The plain below and all the islands of the Danube were covered with Turkish pavilions, and every space filled with a multitude of horses, camels, buffaloes and men in motion, with swarms of Tartars dispersed in their usual confusion along the foot of the mountain. Sobieski was not daunted by this formidable sight. His acute and practised eye immediately saw several faults in the position taken by the Turkish commander. "This man," said he, "is badly encamped; he knows nothing of war; we shall certainly beat him." He had before said to some generals in the German army, who were expressing anxiety as to the result of a conflict, "Consider the general you have to deal with, and not the multitude he commands. Which of you at the head of 200,000 men would have suffered this bridge (the bridge of Tulln over the Danube) to be built within five leagues of his camp?"

The sight of the three signal fires was most cheering to the governor of Vienna, who had declared that he would not surrender the town but

with the last drop of his blood; and the more cheering because sickness had now come, in addition to war, to distress the miserable besieged. Sickness was also making great ravages in the Turkish camp, and disaffection to their commander, and superstitious fears and a presentiment of bad fortune were spreading among the men. Early in the morning of the 12th of September the allies, led on by Sobieski, commenced the attack. Mustapha, despising their comparatively small numbers, left it to the Tartars and the light cavalry to contend with them, while with his janissaries, infantry, and artillery, he continued the firing on the town, in momentary expectation of seeing the signal of capitulation hung out. About eleven o'clock, finding the battle in the plain becoming formidable, he left the batteries, and took the command of the troops. Sobieski in person was here opposed to him, but the Polish infantry had not come up, and nothing decisive could yet be expected. At five in the afternoon the vizier had returned to his tent, and was sipping his coffee under its crimson draperies; but his tranquillity did not last long. Sobieski, as soon as his infantry arrived, ordered them to take possession of some ground which commanded the vizier's position. This they gallantly and successfully did, and from this time all became confusion in the Turkish camp. The men, seized with a panic, began to fly. An eclipse of the moon added to their alarm; the sight of the

King of Poland, with the long streamers floating from the lances of his guard as he was forcing his way to the vizier's tent, gave wings to their terrors; and so rapid and sudden was their flight, that by six o'clock their whole army was broken up, and their camp in possession of the Poles. Sobieski could hardly believe that their flight was real, and therefore would not venture on a pursuit, but encamped on the field of battle. In the morning it was found that the Turks were certainly gone.

It was a most touching sight when Sobieski entered Vienna, marching through the breach which had been made in the walls, and was received by the grateful citizens as their deliverer. Even he himself shed tears, and said, "Never did the crown yield one pleasure like this!" He immediately repaired to the great church to return thanks for the victory—a victory that had only cost him 600 men, while the loss of the Turks was immense. It is said that the fugitives never stopped till they reached the shores of the Raab river, a distance of ninety English miles. The vizier, when he found the battle going against him, had rushed through his forsaken camp into his unguarded tent, and, seizing the Koran and the great standard of Mahomet, mounted a fleet camel, and hastened after his flying troops. When he arrived at the Raab, he endeavoured to throw the blame of the defeat on his pashas, and had several of them put to death. But vengeance soon overtook himself: the Sultan's

mandate of execution reached him at Belgrade. The violence of his temper was instantly calmed by the sight of the fatal edict; he became meek and submissive, and after saying a short prayer, put the bowstring with his own hands round his neck.

Richard. But the emperor Leopold, Mamma, what was he doing all this time?

Mrs. M. His proud heart was struggling with the difficulties of his situation. He could not endure his own inferiority, and to feel obliged to a man whom, because he was an elective and not an hereditary king, he would not treat as an equal. Instead of hastening to Vienna to thank his deliverer, he delayed the interview till he could settle the etiquettes to be observed, and determine whether or no he should condescend to give the king of Poland his right hand. "Receive him with open arms," said the Duke of Lorraine, whose advice he asked in this weighty matter, "since he has preserved your empire." At last it was arranged that the interview should take place on horseback in the open plain. When they were come within a short distance of each other, the king of Poland spurred his horse into a gallop. Both sovereigns touched their hats at the same moment, and thus all punctilio were supposed to be satisfied. These ceremonials could not but be exceedingly disgusting and disagreeable to the warm-hearted Sobieski, and the Emperor's constrained manner in the short con-

versation that followed was still more so. Sobieski spoke in Latin with the grace and ease of a gentleman, while the Emperor could with difficulty bring out some cold expressions of gratitude for the deliverance of Vienna. "Brother," said Sobieski, "I am glad I have done you that small service," and soon afterwards terminated the interview. Sobieski continued in the Emperor's dominions till he had driven out all the Turks. On one occasion he and his son James, who accompanied him throughout the campaign, narrowly escaped being taken prisoners. But he two days afterwards attacked the common enemy with renewed vigour, and gained another great victory. He then returned to Poland, and arrived at Cracow on the 24th of December, carrying with him all the glory of saving Vienna and of having upheld the sinking power of the empire. And this is the epoch from which historians date the decline of the Ottoman power, and the security of all the great interests both of Germany and of the other Christian nations of Europe from its future assaults.

George. And what effect had all this glory on Poland and on the king?

Mrs. M. Alas! from this time the happiness and prosperity of both visibly declined. Cabals, dissensions, and corruption became more than ever the portion of Poland; and avarice and the ambition of raising his family sullied the bright fame of Sobieski. The only warlike operation in which he

was afterwards concerned was an expedition which he undertook into Wallachia and Moldavia, the sovereignty of which provinces Leopold had promised to make hereditary in his family, if he could win them from the Turks. This vague promise was nearly all the repayment the Emperor made him for his great services.

George. But surely, if Sobieski could conquer those countries, he might have made them hereditary sovereignties for himself without being obliged to that grudging emperor !

Mrs. M. The emperors, as well as the popes, assumed a right to confer royal titles. The conferring the kingdoms themselves was, indeed, a different affair ; Sobieski found his kingdom of Moldavia nothing but a “château en Espagne ;” and after undergoing incredible fatigues and difficulties, was obliged to retreat without having acquired a foot of territory. The Turks, profiting from experience, like burnt children, who are said to dread the fire, avoided coming to an engagement, but harassed him in every possible way, especially by breaking up the roads and destroying all provender both for man and horse. In the course of this profitless expedition, the Polish army passed over the ground on which Zolkiewski had been defeated in the reign of Sigismond III. A monumental pyramid had been placed over the spot in which the hero's bones reposed, and Sobieski read with deep feeling, and was often heard to repeat, the inscription

engraven on it :—“ Learn of me how sweet, how honourable it is to die for one’s country.” Alas ! it would have been happy for him if this had been his own fate also. From this time his reign exhibits nothing but mismanagement, cabals, and discontent. His own extreme parsimony, together with a succession of intrigues, both of himself and the queen, by which they endeavoured to secure the succession in their own family, excited a general dissatisfaction and dislike, which the people, on their part, took no pains to conceal. The king, though greatly supported by his natural equanimity, felt acutely the unpopularity into which he was thus fallen. He was subject also to painful bodily infirmities ; and the approach of old age, which to men in common life often brings the consolation of repose along with it, brought none to him. At length, when he was almost worn out by vexation and disappointment, his life was terminated by a fit of apoplexy, June 17, 1696, after a reign of twenty-two years, and in the 66th year of his age.

He was tall and rather corpulent, “ and was,” as his Irish physician, Dr. Connor, who has written his life, tells us, “ a well-spoken prince, of very easy access, and extremely civil, and had most of the good qualities requisite in a gentleman.” He left three sons, James, Alexander, and Constantine, and one daughter, Teresa, who married the elector of Bavaria, and was the mother of the Emperor Charles VII.

Richard. It is something very melancholy to see Sobieski, after all his great deeds, sink into such an unhonoured old age.

Mrs. M. It was said of him that he was fitter to be a general in time of war than to govern a kingdom in time of peace. At the head of his army he was a hero; in his palace he was the plaything of others.

Richard. But what seems so strange is, that a man who could be, when he chose, so great and so feared, should suffer others to make a plaything of him.

Mrs. M. Talents and wisdom are very different things; and those who have the first are very apt to neglect the last; and this is the reason why we often see clever people do such very silly things.

Mary. But, Mamma, how are people to get wisdom if they have it not?

Mrs. M. The way to do what is *wise* is always to do what is *right*; and in this your Bible and your own conscience must be your guide.

CONVERSATION XI.

[Years after Christ, 1696—1704.]

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS I.

Mrs. Markham. THE factions into which Poland was now divided exceeded those of any former interregnum. Amidst all the jarring of interests and opinions, there prevailed a great disinclination to the Sobieski family. Their conduct before the death of the king had excited a general, and, indeed, a just dislike to them all; and this was increased by an indecent scramble between Prince James and the queen for the riches amassed by him. This scramble, too, was begun as soon as the breath was out of his body. The diet was repeatedly assembled, but the nobles agreed so little, and disputed so much upon every point, whether material or trifling, that nothing was done. And yet to do something was the more necessary, because the army being refused its arrears of pay, which the senate was in no condition to grant, had revolted, and become a band of freebooters, and lived upon the wretched and oppressed peasants. The Tartars also, seeing the country thus disorganized, came pouring in for their share of the spoil. Nothing, however, could check the political contentions which

occupied the electors, from the Primate down to the poorest gentleman who had a vote. And so mercenary were they now become, that money was the only merit in their eyes; and he who was richest and could bribe the highest had the best chance of success. Augustus, the young and wealthy Elector of Saxony, and the Prince of Conti, divided for some time pretty equally the field between them. The French ambassador, the Abbé de Polignac, dealt largely in promises, and in expositions of the immense benefits which Poland would derive from electing the Prince de Conti. But Count Fleming, the Saxon minister, instead of promises gave ready money, which more than counterbalanced the disadvantages under which his master laboured of being a German and a Lutheran. The latter of these objections, moreover, Augustus made no scruple to remove by conforming to the Church of Rome. At last, when the contest had lasted some time, and he was thoroughly tired of the suspense occasioned by the vacillation of the electors, he took a summary mode of settling the affair by coming himself to Cracow, provided with a present of 5000 crowns for the governor and a diamond necklace for his wife, and attended by a body of 10,000 Saxon soldiers. I will not pretend to say which of these inducements operated the most powerfully in causing the gates to be opened to him. Suffice it to say, that opened they were, and that he lost no time in proceeding to his coronation.

Some difficulties still stood in his way. Not only were the crown and other insignia locked up in the treasury, and the keys in possession of the Prince of Conti's party, but also the Archbishop of Gnesna, by whose hands, according to the fundamental laws of Poland, it was necessary for the king to be crowned, was one of the warmest adherents of his rival, and, indeed, at the head of what was called the French faction. The Poles were not people to be deterred by slight difficulties: although it was against the law to break open the door of the treasury, it was agreed that there was no law against making a hole in the wall. The difficulty as to the Archbishop was also got over no less easily, by declaring the see vacant; and all obstacles being thus removed, the Bishop of Cujavia performed the ceremony of the coronation instead of the Primate. And that as little as possible might be wanting to the observance of all customary ceremonials, the obsequies of the late king were solemnized in effigy the day before the coronation. More could not be done, as the actual remains of the poor man were at Warsaw in the hands of the adverse party. During the coronation, Augustus fainted away, which was by many people considered as a bad omen. While these things were going on at Cracow, the partisans of the French prince proclaimed in their turn King Louis, and were rejoiced with the news of his arrival at Dantzig. But though he appeared off that port, the Dantzicks, who were

not on his side, but on that of Augustus, would not permit him to land; and after waiting some little time in the hope of a favourable turn in his affairs, his patience was exhausted, and he returned to France, resigning, and with no very apparent regret, all thoughts of a throne. Some time afterwards, when the French interest was again predominant, he was solicited to return to Poland; but he wisely declined so undesirable an honour, and was satisfied to stay and enjoy his princely possessions in France, and retain the freedom of a subject.

Mary. What a wise man he was !

Mrs. M. And I suspect that Frederick Augustus, who soon found that he had laid out his money in a very unwise purchase, when he bought the crown of Poland, was among those who thought him so.

The departure of the Prince of Conti was, of course, the deathblow of his party. Augustus, having now no competitor, was received into Warsaw; but in Lithuania and other parts of the republic, heats and animosities still subsisted, which kept the people unquiet. Of all the angry and unappeased spirits, the most angry was the Primate, who never forgave the slight that had been put on him at the king's coronation. He at last, however, condescended, though with a very unforgiving heart, to be apparently reconciled, and to give Augustus his benediction in the great church at Warsaw.

Mary. And what became of Sobieski's remains ?
I hope they were properly buried at last ?

Mrs. M. You need not doubt it; and it is said that when Charles XII. of Sweden, as you will soon hear, entered Cracow, the only object for which he showed any respect was the tomb of Sobieski. The story adds, that Charles exclaimed, as he stood gazing at it, “ What a pity so great a man should ever die !”

The Elector of Saxony was about twenty-eight years old when he ascended the throne of Poland. He was tall, and had an imposing presence and an ingratiating manner. He was not devoid of talents or of bravery; but what most captivated his new subjects was his love of splendour. His court was said to be one of the most splendid in Europe; and the Poles might have been quite contented with their king, even though he was a German, if he had had either the good sense or the good heart to accommodate himself as he ought to have done to his new situation. But Augustus, under a pleasing exterior, possessed a selfish and unbending temper; and the wishes of his people, and, indeed, the wishes of any one besides himself, were the last things that he ever considered. He especially gave offence by being always surrounded by his Saxon troops, in direct violation of the law of Poland and of the strongest prejudices, if they merit that name, of the people.

In the year after his election, he had an interview with the Czar Peter I. at Narva; and the two monarchs entered into a treaty to assist each other in an attempt to enrich themselves at the expense

of Sweden. To this treaty the king of Denmark was also a party. He had fixed his eye on Holstein, Peter was to have Ingria, and Augustus chose Livonia as his share of the prey. As Sweden was at this time governed by a young monarch, who had as yet shown no extraordinary talents, the three crowned robbers thought that a favourable juncture now offered itself for the execution of their projects. Accordingly, in 1700, Augustus, without consulting the diet, began offensive operations against Sweden by sending troops into Livonia, and seizing the fortress of Kober. The Polish nation extremely disapproved of this act of the king, and the bishop of Cujavia told him that his attack on Sweden was a gross violation of the rights of nations and of equity, which the Almighty would not fail to punish — a judgment which was verified by the event.

Charles XII., King of Sweden, was at this time about eighteen years of age. His natural energy was stimulated by a sense of the unprincipled injustice with which he was marked out as a prey to his neighbours, and he determined to make them tremble on their thrones. To this object, and to a chivalrous determination to follow up every success to the uttermost, he devoted from this early period the whole of his life. On the 8th of May, 1700, he left his capital to the care of a council of state, and set out on the career of conquest which he seemed to create for himself wherever he came, and which astonished all Europe. He embarked at

Carlscroon, and defeated the fleet of his enemies. He next made a descent on the island of Zealand, and invested Copenhagen, and compelled the king of Denmark to sign a treaty of peace. He was then proceeding to turn his arms against Poland, but receiving intelligence that the Czar had laid siege to Narva in Ingria, he crossed the Baltic in almost the depth of winter, attacked and took the Russian camp, and routed the flying enemy with immense slaughter. This victory at Narva was on the 30th of November. The Czar himself was coming up with fresh forces to attack the Swedes, when he was met by the intelligence that they had thus put his army to flight; he was then obliged to retreat. Not long afterwards he and his ally Augustus had a meeting at Birzen in Lithuania, in which, to console themselves, I suppose, for their ill fortune, they are said to have passed almost the whole time (fifteen days) in a state of the most disgusting intoxication. Amidst these revels they, however, found time to lay down a very comfortable plan for the destruction and division of the Swedish monarchy, every particular of which was duly transmitted to Charles by a young Scotch gentleman who acted as his spy. Charles, however, was again beforehand with his enemies. In the spring of the year 1701 he swept like a whirlwind over Courland, entered the dominions of Augustus, and at Birzen, the place where his own destruction had been planned so shortly before, he vowed never to

leave Poland till he had driven him from his throne. Augustus, who was now become unpopular, particularly in Lithuania, where more or less of a civil war had been kept up ever since he began to reign, had nothing to oppose to the fierce resentment of Charles and the terror of his arms, except his money and his Saxon troops and the support of his barbarous ally. He made an attempt, however, to mollify his enemy by means of the Countess of Koningsmark, a beautiful Swedish lady then residing at Warsaw, whom he sent to intercede with Charles in his favour. But Charles gave her no opportunity of practising her arts upon him; he even refused to see her, and on one occasion, when she had waylaid him in a narrow lane, he turned his horse round, and rode another way. The senate of Poland also sent a deputation to him; but though he permitted the deputies to come into his presence, the only reply he condescended to make to their petitions was, that he would give them an answer at Warsaw. At Warsaw he arrived, and took possession of the town, May 5, 1702. Augustus, who had left the place on his approach, collected an army, chiefly of Saxons, and they and the Swedes encountered at Klissow. Augustus showed on this, as, indeed, he had shown on several other occasions, that his luxurious and voluptuous habits had not spoiled his soldiership. He nevertheless sustained a signal defeat, and fled to Cracow. Charles, though conqueror, was disabled by

a fall from his horse from improving his advantage with his usual vigour. But though Augustus had thus a short respite from the foreign enemy, he could not escape from the disputes amongst his nobles, each of whom wanted to have his own way (and no two ways were alike); and while he was yet entangled in difficulties, Charles was on horseback again, and had taken Cracow, and placed a Swedish garrison there. Charles then returned to Warsaw for the avowed purpose of giving a new king to Poland. "Should I stay here fifty years," said he, "I will not go till I have dethroned Augustus." The Emperor of Austria came forward as a peacemaker between the two kings; but the only condition on which Charles would listen to the mention of peace was that of a formal renunciation of the crown of Poland, signed by Augustus.

Augustus, as a last resource, assembled a diet at Lublin, June 25, 1703. He thought that, in the hard circumstances in which he was now placed, the patriotism of his subjects, if not their loyalty, would induce them to stand by their monarch. But all was in vain; and after much ineffectual struggle, he retired, in the end of the year, to his electoral dominions; and to guarantee himself, if possible, from having a successor appointed in his absence, he contrived to secure and carry with him into Saxony the persons of James and Constantine Sobieski—a piece of unjust policy that availed him little.

This desertion of the king was regarded by the adverse party as an abdication. He was formally deposed in an assembly of the nobles; and the Primate took upon himself the direction of the government as in an interregnum, and invited the King of Sweden to enter into arrangements for the settlement of the public affairs. To this Charles assented, "provided nothing were stipulated in favour of Augustus." Augustus, finding that his absence rather injured than forwarded his prospects, returned to Poland, and summoned a diet at Sandomir, which readily pronounced his deposition illegal and void, and condemned the Primate and others who had conspired against him. But the Primate, in his turn, assembled another and more numerously attended diet in June, 1704, for the purpose of choosing another sovereign. In this, however, he acted merely as the puppet of the king of Sweden, whose will and pleasure was, in fact, the master-spring which governed all the votes of the assembly; and it was his will and pleasure to place the crown on the head of Stanislas Leczinski, a Polish noble of high character, whose only fault seems to have been a want of magnanimity to reject a dignity which could not be bestowed on him except in violation of all the laws of his country.

CONVERSATION XII.

[Years after Christ, 1704—1733.]

STANISLAS I. (LECZINSKI).—FREDERICK
AUGUSTUS RESTORED.

Mrs. Markham. STANISLAS was at this time about twenty-seven years old, five years older than the King of Sweden, in whose presence he had first appeared as one of the deputies from the diet. On that occasion he had expressed himself with so much good sense and in so pleasing a manner, that Charles was immediately struck with him, and said to the persons present, “This man shall be King of Poland.”

Augustus, who was still at Sandomir when he heard of the election of Stanislas, assembled an army of Saxons and Russians with the determination of asserting to the last extremity his own right to the crown. But though he had a most able general in Count Schulemburg, and in his Saxon troops some of the bravest soldiers in Europe, yet the cowardice of his Russian auxiliaries and the unstableness of his Polish adherents brought upon him defeat after defeat. On one occasion, indeed, fortune seemed disposed to befriend him. Making a rapid and extraordinary march, he surprised

Warsaw, and made Count Horn, the Swedish governor, and his garrison prisoners of war. He would also have taken both his rival Stanislas and his arch-enemy the Primate, if they had not saved themselves by a precipitate flight. The Primate's career of artifice was nearly over; he died in August, 1705, without having gained any one of the objects for which he had laboured. Augustus gave the vacant dignity to his steadfast friend, the Bishop of Cujavia. Stanislas, on his part, appointed another Archbishop; and thus there were two kings and two Primates. Throughout the whole of this protracted contest, Augustus, though almost always worsted, was yet never subdued. Saxony continued to furnish him with men and money. His spirits never broke down amidst successive discouragements; and scarcely had he been defeated in one place, when he was seen to appear in the field in another. At last Charles, tired of overrunning Poland, and conquering provinces which revolted as soon as his back was turned, resolved to march into Saxony itself and deprive Augustus of the resources of his electorate. He had no sooner determined on this expedition than, with his usual celebrity, it was already accomplished: almost before it was known that he had left Poland, he was in possession of Saxony. During a whole year, he maintained and enriched his army by the spoil of that fine province, and even talked of deposing Au-

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gustus there as well as in Poland, and of putting his son in his place.

Mary. Poor Augustus! I almost think I begin to be sorry for him.

Mrs. M. His spirits were quite sunk by this last misfortune. To save his electorate he was willing to renounce his kingdom; but he was sadly hampered by his alliance with Peter, who cared nothing for Saxony, and to whom he was pledged to continue the war with Sweden at all hazards. To prevent the Russian general Menzikoff, who began to suspect him of wavering, from making him a prisoner, he was obliged to fight the Swedes at the very time when he was endeavouring to make peace with Charles.

George. Truly he was in what the country people call a *cleft stick*.

Mrs. M. He was in the situation which most people get into sooner or later when they make alliances with bad men for bad purposes. He had the good fortune, however, to defeat the Swedes on this occasion, and to take their general prisoner. Having thus, as he thought, acquitted himself to the Russians, he made the most abject apologies to the King of Sweden, and sued humbly for peace. Charles exacted, as the conditions on which he would grant it, the most humiliating terms. He required that Augustus should renounce all right to the crown, and also to the arms and title of Poland,

and submit to be called merely King Augustus; that he should acknowledge Stanislas as sovereign, and absolve the Poles from their oath of allegiance to himself; that he should surrender the crown jewels and archives, renounce his alliance with Russia, and engage never to countenance any plots against Stanislas. The two Sobieskis, as well as some other prisoners, were to be set at liberty, and other conditions were added, equally galling to the spirit of the fallen monarch. When Peter heard of this treaty, called the treaty of Alt Ranstadt, he was so much touched with pity for Augustus, that it moderated the resentment he had felt at his abandonment of the alliance with himself.

After these terms were settled, Augustus and his conqueror had an interview at a place called Gutttersdorf. Voltaire, in his History of Charles XII., thus describes their meeting:—"Charles was in great boots, and had for a cravat a piece of black silk about his throat. He wore his ordinary dress of coarse blue cloth, with gilt brass buttons, and had by his side the sword he had used at the battle of Narva, on the pommel of which he often leaned."

Mary. He must have been an odd figure for a king!

Mrs. M. He did not give himself much trouble about his toilette. His clothes were often so greasy, that it used to be said they might be fried; and this, indeed, might be easily accounted for, since it

seems to have been his habit, when he ate bread and butter, to spread the butter with his thumbs. It is also said that he rarely or never suffered a comb to come near his head, but that he combed his hair with his fingers. The conversation, if conversation it could be called, between him and the King of Poland ran entirely upon his strange dress and his great boots, which he told Augustus he never took off, except when he lay down to rest. “ This was the whole conversation between two kings, one of whom had taken a crown away from the other: Augustus all the time preserving that air of complaisance and satisfaction which princes and men accustomed to great affairs know how to assume in the midst of the most cruel mortifications.”

Mary. Did the King of Sweden talk about his boots by way of showing contempt, or because he did not know what else to say?

Mrs. M. Perhaps there was a little of both. In spite of the pride and hardness of his character, he might feel a little awkwardness in the company of the polished and elegant Augustus. Charles was a man of few words and of uncultivated mind. He knew a little Latin, which he was prevailed on to learn when young, because the Kings of Denmark and Poland understood it; but nothing could ever induce him to learn French. Almost the only book he ever looked into was *Quintus Curtius*.

George. Ah! I know why he liked Quintus Curtius: it is because it is all about Alexander and his wars.

Mrs. M. His great ambition was to emulate Alexander as a conqueror and to excel him as a soldier. From the time when he girded on his youthful sword at the age of eighteen, he renounced every luxury and indulgence, drank no wine, and lived as hardly as the meanest man whom he commanded. As to his jack-boots, he appears to have thought very highly of them; for when the senate of Stockholm complained of his long absence from Sweden, he threatened to send them one of his great boots as his vicegerent.

Richard. Well, Mamma, how did he and the well-spoken Augustus settle matters?

Mrs. M. He seemed to have a savage delight in tormenting his victim. Among other vexations to which he forced him to submit was that of writing a letter with his own hand to Stanislas, who had written to him to announce that he had been raised to the throne. This letter thus wrung from him, and evidently written with a suppressed spirit of bitterness, was as follows:—

“ Sire and Brother,—If we have not answered your Majesty's letter sooner, it was because we thought the occasion unseasonable for entering upon an epistolary correspondence. However, to satisfy the King of Sweden, and that he may not think us difficult in complying with his demands,

we give you joy upon your accession to the crown, and we hope that your Majesty will find the subjects of your kingdom more faithful and obedient than we left them. The whole world will agree with us in this particular, that for all our favours we have had no return but ingratitude, and that most of the persons on whom we most liberally shed our bounty have been industrious only in forming cabals against us, with the view of promoting our ruin. We heartily hope your Majesty will not be exposed to similar events, recommending you to the Divine protection.

“ Given at Dresden, this 8th day of April, 1707.

Sire and Brother, your good brother and neighbour,

“ AUGUSTUS, R.”

Richard. If he wrote so unwillingly, he need not have written so long a letter, nor have abused his late subjects in so uncalled-for a way.

Mrs. M. Perhaps you will like to hear the answer of Stanislas, which is sufficiently brief.

“ Your Majesty’s communication to me is a fresh obligation from the King of Sweden. I feel obliged for your congratulation on my ascent to the throne. I trust that my subjects will never have any reason to be wanting in their fidelity to me, as I shall observe the laws of the kingdom.

“ STANISLAS, King of Poland.”

These letters, you must naturally think, would have closed all communication between the two

Kings of Poland ; but the King of Sweden did not consider his own triumph complete till he had obliged them to have an interview in his presence —an interview which must have been as painful to the feeling mind of Stanislas as to the degraded Augustus. The meeting took place at Leipsic, and the two kings merely saluted each other, but did not speak.

In the meantime, the Czar, either because he compassionated the fallen state of Augustus, and really wished to reinstate him, or possibly for the sake of levying new contributions in Poland, still kept up his army in that devastated country, and the Poles had the misery of having at once a lengthened civil war and also a Russian and a Swedish army quartered on them. In the month of November, 1707, Charles, who during these transactions had been residing in Saxony, whence he dictated laws to the court of Vienna as well as to that of Dresden, again entered Poland at the head of his troops. At the news of his approach the Russians precipitately retreated. It was a long time before the Czar could prevail on them to stand a battle, and when at last they did, it was only to sustain a defeat. Charles, flushed with victory, thought he had only to push his way to Moscow, and there dictate to the Czar as he had already done to Augustus. But, like Bonaparte in after times, he met with a ruinous overthrow in the depths of that great empire which he invaded. His

successes were at first most rapid, and seemingly complete. In January, 1708, he passed the Niemen, and entered Grodno at the south gate, just as his rival Peter fled out of it at the north gate. He overran Lithuania, crossed the Beresina and the Dnieper, and by the 3rd of October had arrived within 100 leagues of Moscow. But the roads had been broken up and the villages destroyed, and winter was fast approaching, and he therefore turned aside towards the Ukraine. Here commenced his disasters. The Russians resumed the offensive, and, after enduring a long series of almost incredible difficulties, he was at last totally defeated at Pultowa, a town on the eastern frontier of the Ukraine, on the 8th of July, 1709, and fled to Bender to claim the protection of the Turks.

This discomfiture of Charles proved the downfall of Stanislas. Augustus, who had regarded the treaty of Alt Ranstadt as binding no longer than it could be enforced, set out, April 20, 1710, on his return to Poland. The Pope absolved him of his oath to Stanislas, and he was also invited to return by a deputation of several of the Polish nobles, always restless and eager for change. Stanislas, who had now lost the support of the Swedes, and saw that he had no possibility of maintaining himself on his unsteady throne without their help, published a manifesto declaring that he had taken the crown only as the best means of protecting the liberties of his country, and that he was ready to resign it, if,

by so doing, he could restore peace and tranquillity. But on this point the King of Sweden, who had bestowed his crown on him, must of course be consulted; and that intrepid soldier, whose spirit was still undaunted, and who could not be persuaded that in losing the battle of Pultowa he had lost his power over Poland, refused to consent. He is also reported to have said coolly, "If Stanislas will not be king, I will bestow the crown elsewhere." Stanislas at last, being quite wearied out both by his friends and his enemies, set off for Turkey, that he might have a personal conference with Charles on the subject; thus taking, as Voltaire remarks, more trouble to rid himself of his crown than he had taken to get it. But before he reached Bender, he found that Charles's mad conduct had caused the Turks to remove him thence to Demotica, a place not far from Adrianople, where they kept him as a sort of prisoner, till he was induced to return to his own dominions in 1714. They detained Stanislas also at Bender for a time.

Mary. Ah! poor man, I am afraid he was caught in a sad trap!

Mrs. M. He did not remain long in it; and in July, 1714, we find him residing in the duchy of Deuxponts, a small hereditary possession which Charles had in Germany, and which he bestowed on his brother king as an indemnification for all he had lost in Poland. In this small duchy Stanislas

enjoyed for a time the tranquillity of a private station. Augustus, in the mean time, again reigned in Poland, and without a competitor; and after a few struggles, like the last gusts of a subsiding tempest, amongst the disaffected Poles and Lithuanians, a diet of pacification was called, old grievances were wiped away, new promises of future good behaviour were made, and at last an end was put to a civil war which had lasted, with little intermission, from the death of Sobieski, a period of twenty years.

Mary. And I hope that King Augustus, though I don't like him very much, lived in peace and quietness the rest of his life.

Mrs. M. As long as Charles XII. lived, there was no great peace or quietness for any body. Even while he was a prisoner in Turkey, he was always dwelling on the hope of obtaining a signal vengeance on his enemies; and on his return to his own dominions, instead of repairing to his capital, and endeavouring to make peace, and to heal the wounds which his long wars had occasioned, he provoked the King of Prussia and the Elector of Hanover (our George I.) to become also his enemies. Even overmatched as he thus was, yet his personal qualities and the credit of his past successes still made him formidable, to Poland especially. Augustus, therefore, so long as Charles lived, dared not think himself safe from his rival, and is even accused of sending some ruffians to

seize on his person, and bring him prisoner to Dresden. The villains were discovered, and brought to Stanislas, and the only revenge he took was to say to them, "What injury have I done to you? and if none, why should you attempt my life? Were I to retaliate, I should take away yours. But I forgive you: live and do better." At length the death of Charles in 1718 relieved Augustus from all fears for his crown, and deprived Stanislas not only of his friend and protector, but also of his little possession of Deuxponts. He, however, found an asylum in France, where his amiable qualities made him both loved and honoured, and where his daughter, as I think you know, became afterwards the queen of Louis XV. The remainder of Augustus's reign was passed in a state of comparative tranquillity, the chief interruptions of which arose from some religious differences between the Catholics and the Lutherans and Calvinists, or, as they were called, the *Dissidents*. But of these I need not give you a particular account. The king's personal attention was principally engrossed by his desire to make the crown hereditary in his family, and by his passion for china—

Richard. His passion for china! What can you mean, Mamma?

Mrs. M. Just what I say—a passion for china, which he carried to the greatest excess. There is still at Dresden a palace called the Japanese palace, filled with china of his collecting, and containing

every variety that Asia and Europe could produce. Among these are twelve jars, remarkably ugly ones, as I have been told, which Augustus obtained from the King of Prussia, Frederic William, in exchange for a regiment of horse.

Augustus died in January, 1733; and notwithstanding the profusion and splendour of his court, left great riches. He married a daughter of the Marquis of Brandenburg Bareith, and had one son, Augustus. He had also a natural son Maurice, who became a distinguished person under the name of Count Saxe, in almost all the wars of his time. After his father's death he entered the French service, and was made a Marshal of France.

Augustus was remarkable for his extraordinary strength, and also for his size. A suit of his gigantic armour of polished steel is shown at Dresden. The cuirass alone weighs forty-two pounds, and an iron cap, which he wore under his helmet to make security doubly sure, weighs fifteen pounds. There is the mark of a shot in the armour, which is said to have been made by a double charge which the king had fired against himself to try the temper of the steel.

Mary. That was rather a silly experiment; for he could have tried his armour just as well when he was not in it.

Mrs. M. To be sure it was an act more like the fool-hardy King of Sweden than a lover of pleasure such as Augustus.

George. O, Mamma, if you have time, do tell us something more of Charles XII.! I am sure he must have been a fine fellow!

Mrs. M. There are many different senses in which the words “a fine fellow” are used and are to be understood. There is something, no doubt, in Charles’s dauntless and chivalrous energy which we cannot help admiring; and yet there is nothing less deserving of real praise than a spirit of useless activity and uncalculating revenge. His presumption, too, was as great as his bravery. In 1708, the Czar, after repassing the Dnieper, sent him proposals of reconciliation; but all the answer which he condescended to make was as follows:—“I will treat with the Czar at Moscow”—an answer much like that which he had given on a former occasion to the Polish deputies. When this answer was repeated to Peter, he coolly said, “My brother Charles affects to play the part of Alexander, but I flatter myself he will not find in me a Darius.” In fact, Charles found in Peter an antagonist not inferior to himself in courage and activity, and very much his superior in abilities and in forethought, and who made his contest with the Swedes a school in which to teach his own subjects the art of war. Thus, by the time Charles got deep into Russia, he found, instead of undisciplined troops, who fled at the very sight of him, hardy and well-trained soldiers, who, if not equal to his own, were yet very formidable opponents. By this time, also, his own

army was reduced to the greatest distresses. Its numbers were thinned by the sword, by fatigue, and by privations of every kind; and in the month of February, 1709, five months before the battle of Pultowa, it mustered little more than 18,000 Swedes. The cannon had been left behind in different places, the draft horses had perished, and the men themselves, having worn out almost all their clothes, had no better protection from the inclemency of the winter than the undressed hides of animals. Their food also was equally bad and scanty. The men began to murmur, and one of them brought a piece of the wretched black and mouldy bread, which was now almost their only food, to the king. Charles took it very quietly, and ate it, saying, "I cannot say it is very palatable, but nevertheless it is eatable." The soldiers after this were ashamed to complain, and consumed their miserable morsels in silence. Pultowa, where the king received, as I have told you, his fatal overthrow, was a town in which the Czar had laid up magazines, of which Charles vainly resolved to possess himself. But the place was well defended; and in one of the assaults he was wounded in the heel. He nevertheless continued on horseback six hours afterwards, riding about and giving his orders. Some accounts say that he at last fainted; others that his attendants, seeing the blood streaming from his boot, persuaded him to return to his tent. The surgeons, on examining the hurt, found that the bone was

injured, and recommended an immediate amputation. One surgeon, however, thought it might be possible to save the limb if the king would submit to some very deep incision. "Set to work, then, directly," said the king, "cut away—don't be afraid." He held his leg with his own hands during the operation, and looked on with as much composure as if he had been a mere spectator.

Richard. He must have been made of harder flesh than other people : he could not have felt !

Mrs. M. Whatever stuff his flesh was made of, his mind certainly must have come out of a hard mould; and if he had little compassion for others, it must be owned that he had no indulgence for himself. His wound, in spite of his resolute spirit, confined him to his tent, until he heard that the Czar was approaching with an army of 70,000 men. To oppose this army, he had, after leaving a guard for the camp and the baggage, about 26,000 men, of whom 18,000 were Cossacks. However, he gave orders to his generals for a battle on the morrow. He never called a council of war, or asked advice, and his officers never disputed his will. The generals left his tent with a heavy heart, and gave themselves over for lost. The next morning Charles placed himself in a litter, drawn by two horses, at the head of his infantry, and the battle began. The Swedes fought with their accustomed valour, but were soon overpowered by numbers. The king, with a drawn sword in one hand and a pistol in

the other, bore his part in the combat. Both the horses of his litter were killed by a cannon ball; and when these were replaced by another pair, another ball shattered the litter, and the king was thrown to the ground.

The Swedes, seeing their king fall, supposed he was slain, and were thrown into confusion. Charles, however, though covered with dust and blood, and almost insensible from the effects of his fall, was not dead, and was raised from the ground by the soldiers about him; and in this sad condition a Polish gentleman named Poniatowski, who, from admiration of his character and attachment to his person, had followed his fortunes, came up to his succour. He had by this time so much recovered his ordinary self as to refuse to fly; and he would inevitably have been taken prisoner if Poniatowski and Frederick, the king's faithful valet, had not taken him, whether he would or not, and lifted him on a horse. Frederick supported him, and Poniatowski, assuming the command, rallied about 500 Swedish horse, and fought his way to the baggage. He could not stay here, however, as the post was not maintainable against the enemy. The king, in consequence of his wound, could scarcely sit on a horse, and only with great pain. He had never indulged himself in the luxury of a carriage, but the carriage of his chancellor, Count Piper, was among the baggage, and in this he was placed. Asking for the count, he was told that he was

among those who were taken prisoners. “What! prisoners to the Muscovites? Let us rather go to the Turks!”

Accordingly, this distressed party set off again, and made for the Dnieper. The carriage broke down, and Charles was again mounted on horse-back, and then his horse fell from fatigue. But at length, in the night of the 9th of July, he reached the river, where General Levenhaup had already arrived with the wreck of the Swedish army, who were both rejoiced and astonished to find their king still alive. Fever, too, had now done for him what pain could not do. Weak and almost insensible, he was necessitated to submit to the guidance of others, and under the constant superintending care of Poniatowski was conveyed safely to Bender. A small number, also, of his brave troops passed the river in safety, while the rest of the army, for want of boats, were overtaken by Menzikoff, the Russian general, and made prisoners. The Czar was elated beyond measure by his victory over the hitherto invincible Swede, and celebrated his success in the Roman manner, by a triumphal entrance into Moscow. The fragments of Charles’s broken litter were placed on a car, and followed by Count Piper and the rest of the Swedish prisoners, walking two and two. Then came the Czar, mounted on the horse he had ridden at Pultowa.

To follow Charles through all the rest of his adventures would be too long a story. He remained

five years in Turkey, during which he never ceased urging the Grand Vizier and the Sultan to make or to renew war on Russia. War was made, but to Charles's great rage and indignation was concluded by a treaty, just as he arrived, after riding post haste from Bender at the Turkish camp, in the hope of some fighting. We must do the Turks the justice to say, that they were exceedingly patient with all his freaks, and treated him handsomely; but at last he fairly tired them out, and they removed him, as you were told, from Bender, as a sort of prisoner at large, to Demotica. In one of his unaccountable humours, he took, like a petted child, to his bed, and would not quit it for several months. With the same spirit of impatience, though manifested, as you will say, in a different manner, when at last he left Turkey, he travelled day and night without stopping, and this by a very long and circuitous route, through Hungary, Austria, and even through Wurtemburg. When he arrived at Stralsund (this was on the 21st of November, 1714), his legs were so much swelled that he was obliged to have his boots, his dear boots, cut off. The next day he surveyed the fortifications of Stralsund, and reviewed the troops. In the following year he was besieged in this town, which was at last, on the 15th of December, 1715, reduced to surrender. But he had himself got off the night before in a small boat, breaking a way through the ice in the port, and in constant peril of

being taken by the enemy. As he passed the isle of Rugen, he was fired on by a Danish battery: one ball killed two men by his side, and another broke the mast of the boat. He got safe, however, to Isted, in the island of Schonen, and thence to Carlscoorn; but though so near Stockholm, he would not return there till he could return as a conqueror. In the March following he invaded Norway with an army of 20,000 men, but was obliged to retreat. In October, 1718, he invaded that cold country again, and in the beginning of December laid siege to the fortress of Fredericshall, though the severity of the frost made it almost impossible to work at the trenches. On the 11th of the same month, he was killed by a shot from the walls, as he was making a survey of the works. The ball entered his temple, and he fell instantly across the parapet of the trench, putting his hand by an involuntary act to his sword in the moment of death. He was only in his 37th year; and though his surprising courage and intrepidity have procured him a place in the temple of fame, his folly and recklessness, and unreasonableness, might have placed him, with quite as much justice, in a *maison des fous*.

George. Alas! I find he was not so fine a fellow as I thought. And yet Dr. Johnson, in his poem of the Vanity of Human Wishes, has put him in the place in which Juvenal, whom he imitates, has put Hannibal. And, in truth, it was those verses

chiefly that made me always long to know something more about him.

Mrs. M. Then read us the verses, George, if you please. Mary will, I dare say, like them quite as well, after hearing something about him, as you liked them before.

George.—

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide.
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him, and no labours tire :
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain :
No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field.
Behold surrounding kings their powers combine,
And one capitulate, and one resign :
Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain ;
“ Think nothing gain'd,” he cries, “ till nought remain ;
“ On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
“ And all be mine beneath the polar sky.”
The march begins in military state,
And nations on his eye suspended wait :
Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,
And Winter barricades the realms of Frost :—
He comes : nor want nor cold his course delay.
Hide, blushing glory, hide Pultowa's day.
The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,
And shows his miseries in distant lands ;
Condemn'd a needy suppliant to wait,
While ladies interpose, and slaves debate.
But did not chance at length her error mend ?
Did no subverted empire mark his end ?
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound,
Or hostile millions press him to the ground ?

—His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand :
He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

Richard. And now I want to know something about the two Sobieskis, who were taken prisoners to Saxony.

Mrs. M. These two brothers, James and Constantine, regained their liberty by the intervention of the King of Sweden, in December, 1706. James from that time till his death, in 1737, led a retired life, and thought no more of crowns and courts. He married the daughter of Philip William, Elector Palatine, and had two daughters, of whom the elder married the Duke de Bouillon : the younger, Mary Clementina, married, in 1719, Prince James Edward, son of James II.

Mary. What our Pretender ?

Mrs. M. Yes ! and she was the mother of Charles Stuart, afterwards Duke of Albany, whose history, together with that of his brother, the Cardinal of York, you are all of you well acquainted with. Constantine Sobieski died in 1726, leaving no children. Alexander Sobieski, who escaped imprisonment when his brothers fell into the hands of Augustus, was offered, by Charles XII., the crown of Poland ; but he refused it, saying that nothing should tempt him to accept a crown which more properly belonged to his brother.

George. I suspect, Richard, that when Mamma spoke of Bonaparte having got into the same sort of difficulties with Charles XII., you and I thought

of somebody who got into the same scrape long before either of them. Do you not remember our last lesson in Herodotus?

Mrs. M. If your story is in Herodotus, it is for you to translate it, not me.

Richard. It has been translated often enough, I believe, *Mamma*, and I dare say you know it very well: but as George and I are fresh from reading it, you may perhaps like to have it out of our book instead of your own. The story is, then, that when Darius invaded Scythia, the Scythians retreated before him, and inveigled him to pursue, and that, when he was got a long way into the country, somewhere, I suppose, in the land of our friends the Cossacks, the kings of the Scythians sent him a present, consisting of a bird, a mouse, and a frog, and five arrows.

Mary. But what could that mean, Richard? that tells us nothing at all.

Richard. That's only because you are so impatient, Mary, as not to wait till I come to the end. Well, King Darius, who seems to have been no Solomon, and whose system it was to send half over the world to demand offerings of earth and water, by way of confession that both earth and water were his, was at first very much pleased with the present. "The mouse," he said, "burrows in the earth, and lives on the fruits of it; there is the earth: the frog lives in the water; there is the water: the bird is the emblem of the horses of these equestrian tribes;" (this, as it seems to me, it was

rather hard for him to make out;) “and the arrows are their weapons. So that this present,” said the king, “is an emblem of their surrender to us of all that they have.”

Mary. But surely that was not their meaning, Richard!

Richard. Why, to be sure, there was a man among the Persians themselves, who gave a very different sort of interpretation; and said that what the Scythians meant was, that unless the Persians could fly through the air like birds, or burrow in the earth like mice, or dive like frogs, they could not escape the Scythian arrows.

Mary. Ah! Richard, that was the true meaning.

Richard. And yet Darius, by great good luck, got out of the trap better than either Charles XII. or Napoleon.



Charles XII.

CONVERSATION XIII.

[Years after Christ 1733—1763.]

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS II.

Mrs. Markham. At the time of the death of Augustus, Stanislas Leczinski was living happily in France, devoting himself to the tranquillity of a benevolent and a literary life. But the ambition of his son-in-law, Louis XV., and the wishes of his countrymen, now united to tear him from his retirement, and to prevail on him to encounter once again the toils and the hazards of an uneasy and precarious throne. He was 57 years of age, and it was twenty years since he had quitted Poland. Time and philosophy had extinguished whatever sparks of ambition might at one part of his life have glowed in his bosom, and it was with sincere reluctance that he set out on his return to his native land, saying with a heavy heart, as he departed, that “he should soon be near his enemies, and far from his friends.” No enemies, however, appeared at first, and he arrived safely in Poland, travelling, in order to avoid the schemes of Austria and Russia to intercept him, in the disguise of a German merchant.

A diet was assembled, and Stanislas was re-

elected by the unanimous votes of 60,000 nobles. But it was too much the interest of the Russians to keep up their influence in Poland, and of the Austrians to prevent the French influence from extending, to suffer him to wear his crown in peace. These great powers won over a party in favour of the late king's son, the young Elector of Saxony, and marched a numerous and overwhelming force into Poland to support his election. Stanislas retired to Dantzic, where he hoped to secure himself until the arrival of succours from France. After sustaining a siege of some months, and the promised succour not arriving, he could no longer endure the miseries to which he saw his friends subjected by their adherence to him, and resolved to give up the useless struggle. He quitted Dantzic June 27, 1734: and the next day the town capitulated.

Stanislas, when he left Dantzic, set out at night in a boat, with one of his generals and four peasants, with the intention of ascending the Vistula till he could find a safe landing-place from which he might escape into Prussia. The river had inundated the surrounding country, and he had to make his way through morasses and flooded meadows. Russians and Cossacks occupied every neighbouring post, and danger beset him on all sides. There must have been some great delay also in getting clear of the town. The morning dawned before the party had proceeded an English mile; and they consequently were compelled to take refuge, during

the day, in a mean cabin on the banks of the river, within sight of the city, where they were in the apprehension every moment of being surprised by the enemy. At night they resumed their voyage; but at midnight the general and two of the peasants left the boat, to endeavour to find a better route by land, leaving the king with the two other peasants for his guides. The king, at daybreak, found a hut belonging to an acquaintance of his two guides, in which he again concealed himself during the day: and these men, though they knew the rank of their companion, and that a great reward awaited whoever would give him up to the enemy, and though their obstinacy and cowardice, together with their proneness to intoxication, frequently caused him the greatest vexation and difficulty, yet never once thought of betraying him. At nightfall they re-entered the boat, but soon left it on the verge of the inundation, and began to walk, or rather to wade, with extreme fatigue, through the soft muddy ground, in which sometimes their exertions only plunged them the deeper. At length they arrived at a hovel, in which the king soon perceived that the owner, who chanced to have seen him before, knew him in spite of his disguise. Stanislas at once determined to make a friend of this man, and replied: "Yes, my friend, I am Stanislas; and your countenance, if I may judge by it, assures me that you will not refuse me the aid I want in my present situation." This open avowal and appeal

to the man's generosity had their effect: and he proved of the greatest assistance in procuring the king a boat in which he crossed the river. At parting the king endeavoured to force him to accept a handful of ducats: but he refused all remuneration, till at last, when strongly urged, he said he would take two ducats, to keep as a remembrance of his sovereign.

After thus crossing the Vistula, and encountering other difficulties and adventures too long to particularize, Stanislas reached at last the shore of the Nogat, a branch of the Vistula, and then the boundary between Poland and Prussia. On passing this river he would be in safety. But a boat was nowhere to be found. He entered a house and told the mistress that he was a cattle-dealer, and wanted to buy cattle. " You need not cross the river for that purpose," answered the woman, " for I have cattle to sell, and I dare say we shall agree on the price." Another reason for passing the river was now to be found. However, the good woman was very courteous and obliging, and put the king in the way of getting a boat, in which he crossed without further difficulty, and then once more breathed freely and in safety.

Mary. Did he ever go back to be King of Poland again?

Mrs. M. No: he returned to France, and after a short time, some arrangements were made between the Emperor Charles VI. and the King of

France, by which the provinces of Lorraine and Bar were settled on him during his life. Here he lived to the extreme old age of 89, in peace and tranquillity, dividing his time between his studies, to which he was greatly attached, and the cares of his little principality. He has left an interesting work under the title of *Les Œuvres d'un Philosophe Bienfaisant*. He died in 1766, from the effects of an accident. He set his dressing gown on fire, and being very feeble, could not put it out, and died in consequence of the burns he received.

Augustus II., meanwhile, was well contented to receive his crown at the hands of Russia and Austria, and troubled himself little further about his royal duties than to sign the *pacta conventa*, and to attend the sessions of the diets. But these he contrived to make as short as possible ; and the shorter they were, the better able he found himself to devote his time to the chase, and to his passion for music, and for collecting pictures.

Mary. I suppose he was very young, and that that was the reason of his being so foolish.

Mrs. M. I am afraid I cannot make that excuse for him. Augustus II. was 37 years old when he began to reign. He was remarkably handsome, and very good-natured, but excessively stupid, and devoid of every fine or noble quality. He kept a magnificent court, more from habit than from any love of splendour, and left all affairs of state to his minister, Count Bruhl. The minister

was as inefficient as his master, and was a man of unbounded pomp and extravagance, and seemed to study nothing but how to preserve his influence over the king. Under this evil and incompetent guidance, even the military character of the Poles began to decay. The pospolite, on which the defence of the country mainly depended, was left untrained and without arms, and though the men who composed it were brave and courageous, yet their courage was of little avail, since they were without discipline, the officers incapable of commanding, and the men unused to obey. In this manner passed the first twenty years of this ignoble reign, during which period factions were secretly ripening, which enabled Russia, after the death of Augustus, to nominate his successor, and which finally led to the seizure and partitions of the whole of the Polish territory by that great power, and by Prussia and Austria. But this part of the history I must not anticipate.

The first interruption of the apparent tranquillity of the reign of Augustus II., was not from his northern, but from his western neighbour, Frederick II., King of Prussia, who in his great struggle of what we call the seven years' war with the Empress queen, Maria Theresa, took possession of the Electorate of Saxony. Augustus, who was then at Dresden, staid not to defend his capital, but fled in all haste, first to a strong camp at Pirna, and eventually to Warsaw, leaving his queen and children

to take the best care they could of themselves. In his haste, he also left behind him state papers which proved his having united with the courts of Vienna and Petersburgh in a secret treaty for the destruction of Frederick himself. I mention this circumstance chiefly as giving occasion to a trait of character in the Queen of Poland, which I think will amuse you. Frederick, who knew that these papers were at Dresden, sent Marshal Keith to the palace to seize them. The queen positively refused to deliver them up, and persisted in sitting on the trunk which contained them, till she was convinced that force would be used to compel her to move, if she did not get up of her own accord.

George. Now that's what I call a good wife, to do what she could for her husband.

Mrs. M. I believe she felt more than he did on all public and political matters. She was the daughter of the Emperor Joseph II., and very probably influenced Augustus more than she ought to have done, to his indiscreet connexion with the Austrian court.

Mary. And what became of her afterwards?

Mrs. M. She died at Dresden in the following year, 1757, and, as is said, of a broken heart, at hearing of the King of Prussia's having gained the battle of Rosbach. She had been in feeble health for some time, and having received the news of that battle at night before she went to bed, was found dead in the morning.

Mary. And what became of the poor children?

Mrs. M. The poor children continued for some time longer at Dresden, and I hope their being there was of some use to the poor inhabitants. For when Marshal Daun, the Austrian general, besieged the town, in 1758, he spared it more than he would otherwise have done, lest *they* should be hurt. At the peace of 1763, the Electorate of Saxony was restored to Augustus, but with the capital ruined, the people impoverished, and many of them, indeed, carried off to people the desolate provinces of Prussia. Poland had meanwhile remained at peace; but not in that healthy and invigorating peace which enriches a state and makes it happy. The indolence of the king, the corruption of the nobles, and the direct and indirect influence of Russia, increased daily more and more. The country was filled with Russian soldiers, and the servile Poles looked to Petersburgh rather than to Warsaw as their real capital, and as the place where their chief interests centred, and whence they had to expect favour and promotion. Catherine II. was now the Czarina: Peter the Great, the antagonist of Charles XII., had died in the year 1725, and left the throne to his widow, the Empress Catherine I., a woman of low birth, but of great talents and merit. On Catherine's death, two years afterwards, Peter's grandson, Peter II., mounted the throne. He died in 1730, and was succeeded first by the Empress Anne; then by Ivan, an infant only nine months old,

who was deposed in the year after his accession, and finally murdered; and then by Elizabeth. In 1762, Peter III., son of Anne, a daughter of Peter the Great, succeeded Elizabeth. Catherine II. was his wife. She was by birth a princess of Anhalt Zerbst, and was a woman of superior abilities, but without principle, and of boundless ambition. Her husband was a very clownish, and eccentric, and disagreeable man, and had scarcely reigned six months when he was found dead in his bed; nor is there any doubt entertained but that he was murdered, and that his wife was privy to the deed. On his death, Catherine was declared Empress, and on October 5, 1763, Augustus III., King of Poland, closed his inglorious and insignificant life. He had been led to expect that the crown of Poland would be made hereditary in his family. But a strong party had been formed to exclude, not only the electoral family of Saxony, but also all foreign princes, and to enact a law, that for the future only a Piast, or native Pole, should be eligible to the throne. And all the influence of the court of Petersburgh was employed to uphold this party the more, because it was plain that a native Pole would be more in its power than any Austrian, or Prussian, or Saxon prince could be expected to be. It is, nevertheless, supposed, that if Augustus's eldest son had lived, he would have succeeded his father. But he died of the small pox before the election took place. He is described as having been

a very amiable man, and of a good understanding, but was most unfortunately deformed. He was succeeded in the electorate by his son, Frederick Augustus, then only thirteen years old, who was raised afterwards by Bonaparte to the title of King of Saxony, and died in 1827. He, of course, as being a minor, could not aspire to the crown of Poland at this time.

George. I would not interrupt you till you had come to a pause; but when you were speaking of Lorraine, I wished to ask you by what right it was given to Stanislas. I thought that Lorraine had dukes and princes of its own.

Mrs. M. The Emperor Henry III. granted the Duchy of Lorraine, in 1048, to Gerard of Alsace, and from that time it continued to be an independent state, and, as you observe, had dukes of its own till 1633. In that year, Louis XIII. dispossessed the then reigning duke, Charles IV., in revenge for his having afforded a shelter to the Duke of Orleans when under the king's displeasure. This Duke Charles was a most eccentric person, and there are some amusing anecdotes of him in the Memoirs of the Count of Rochfort, a French gentleman of that age, who was well acquainted with him. "This Duke of Lorraine," says the Count, "having nothing to disturb him, spent his time, when not in the field, in some employments that were very particular to himself. I have seen him play strange pranks when I was at Brussels. I have seen him

dance in the open streets amongst the mob to the common tunes of those people. He lodged in the rue de Fripiere, so called from the pawnbrokers who lived there ; and I saw him one day dressed like one of these people ; and he had hung with old clothes the door and windows of his lodging : so that one that did not know him would have supposed him to be of that trade ; sitting, as he did, in a great chair with an apron before him, scolding with his next door neighbour all one as if he had been his fellow. One day a trooper came and cheapened a buff coat which hung up amongst other old clothes. The duke told him he should try it on before he set him the price. And so taking it down he put it on for him ; which the other let him do, not imagining 'twas the Duke of Lorraine. But the Duke d'Arshot, and some other officers coming by, would not conceal their knowledge of him, seeing him in such a figure : by which means the horseman seeing his error, and not knowing what would become of him, got upon his horse while they were making their compliments, and not daring to delay to pull off the coat, rode away with it. The duke, who had no mind to lose it, ran after him in the street as hard as he could drive : but the other having six legs to his two, 'twas to no purpose. The officers rallied the duke very heartily upon this accident, which they thought would make him leave off these sorts of diversions. But 'twas all one with him. He was at it again in two or three

days, having a temper so naturally inclined to something odd and unusual, that he was never better pleased than when he was thus exposing himself."

On the death of this prank-playing duke, the title, ~~but without the territory~~, descended to Prince Charles of Lorraine, the competitor of Sobieski for the crown of Poland, and afterwards, as you know, his associate at the siege of Vienna. By the treaty of Ryswick, in 1697, the duchy was restored to its rightful prince, Duke Leopold, son of Prince Charles. Leopold died in 1729, with the reputation of having made his little state one of the most happy and flourishing in Europe. His son Francis married Maria Theresa, the only child of the Emperor Charles VI., and in 1735, exchanged Lorraine with his father in law, for the succession to the grand duchy of Tuscany. The Emperor ceded Lorraine to Stanislas, with the reversion, after his death, to France. Thus you see that our good friend Stanislas came by his little territory very honestly. He added many very noble buildings to the town of Nanci, his capital, where he lies buried.

CONVERSATION XIV.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF STANISLAS II. (PONIATOWSKI), TO THE FIRST PARTITION OF POLAND.

[A. D. 1764—1773.]

Mrs. Markham. THE Empress of Russia had, by the weakness of the two last monarchs, and the degeneracy of the people, become the arbitress of the fortunes of Poland ; and it had been much expected that she would confer the crown, now vacant, on one of the princes of the Czartoriski family, a family among the noblest in Poland, who had long been courting it at her hands. She, however, placed it on the head, not of either of the Czartoriskis, but of one of their relations, a young favourite of her own, the Count Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski. Stanislas Augustus was the son of the Count Poniatowski, who had performed such signal services to Charles XII. after his defeat at Pultowa ; and the Empress is said to have waited with ill-concealed impatience for the death of Augustus III., that she might realize her intentions towards him. A band of patriotic nobles, however, was still left in Poland, who made a last struggle to preserve their independence. The diet opened May 7, 1764. Prince Radzivil, the wealthiest noble of the repub-

lic, Branicki, who had been grand general of the crown, and some other nobles, kept firm to their duty, and brought a body of 3000 men to Warsaw to protect the freedom of election. But a force of 10,000 Russians occupied all the positions. Poniatowski himself was surrounded by Russian guards, and the senate-house was filled with Russian soldiers. Only eight out of fifty senators were present, and the marshal of the last diet, an old man of 80, whose office it was to open the session, did not for some time make his appearance. At length General Mokranowski entered the senate-house, leading the old marshal, who, however, held his staff reversed, as a sign that the diet was not yet opened. Mokranowski then proceeded to exercise his veto. "Since the Russian troops," he said, "hem us in, I suspend the authority of the diet." Immediately the soldiers rushed at him, and a scene of great confusion took place. Several voices exclaimed, "Mokranowski, retract your veto; we are no longer free: you are rushing on certain death." "Be it so," he replied, "strike, I shall die free, and in the cause of liberty." The old marshal was then called on to resign his staff, but he was firm and refused to comply. Both he and Mokranowski, after some opposition, then forced their way to the door.

This determined conduct of those brave men deprived Poniatowski of all pretence to a legal election. But numbers and corruption prevailed in his

favour. Prince Adam Czartoriski was elected marshal, and, finally, on September 7, 1764, a comparatively small body of nobles, barely 4000, instead of the usual number of 80,000, met in the field of election, and conferred the crown on Stanislas Augustus. In the mean time, Radzivil and Branicki had in vain attempted to form a confederation of the Poles in the cause of their country: and the gallant Mokranowski had been dispatched to Berlin, to offer the crown to the King of Prussia's brother, the brave Prince Henry. But Frederick, who had but just escaped, if with honour and success, yet with extreme difficulty, from the perils which had environed him in the seven years' war, had no inclination to enter into a new quarrel with the despotic and powerful mistress of *all the Russias*, and would not even permit the Pole to have access to his brother.

Stanislas Augustus was about thirty-two years old at the time of his election. He was very handsome, had engaging manners and an amiable disposition, and was not without talents; but his want of moral courage often made him, while he talked like a wise man, act like a very foolish one. It is also said of him that he was very vain of his handsome person, and that he devoted much of his time and thoughts to its adornment. With the same sort of vanity he refused, at his coronation, to conform, as almost all his predecessors had done, to the Polish custom of having the hair cut

short; and instead of using the Polish dress, he always dressed in the German or French fashion. Notwithstanding these great weaknesses, English travellers who visited Poland during his reign, and were admitted into his private society, speak in high terms of his many good qualities, and testify to his having entertained a painful feeling of the wrongs which his country had suffered from Russia—wrongs which he would gladly have redressed had it been in his power. But fettered by his obligations to the Empress, and overawed and watched by her ambassador Prince Repnin, he could do nothing but what she commanded. He endeavoured, in the beginning of his reign, to introduce some beneficial changes into the constitution, but was soon given to understand by Catherine that everything must go on in the old way.

Mary. I really do not see how the poor king could have helped himself, even if he had been a cleverer man than he was.

Mrs. M. Certainly he had no physical or political force to oppose to the tyranny of Russia. But he might still have done something to check the corruptions which were undermining the character of his countrymen. Unhappily for them, as well as for himself, he was vicious, as well as frivolous, and his court was the most dissipated in Europe. He thus lost all the personal respect which, notwithstanding the illegal and inexcusable way in which he had gained the crown, he might have

acquired by his otherwise amiable qualities ; and instead of being looked up to by the people as their friend and protector, for so in his heart he really wished to be, he became the object of their contempt.

The early part of this reign was disturbed by vehement disputes with the Dissidents. Few of them were noble ; and those few had, by an act of the late king, been deprived of their seats in the diet. They now applied for Catherine's interference in their favour, and she, who seemed to make it her policy, or at least her pleasure, to foment the disturbances of this unhappy country for the sake of keeping it more completely in her own power, listened readily to their prayer. These disturbances were, however, at length composed, and the Dissidents were admitted to all the privileges enjoyed by the Catholics, excepting that of being eligible to the crown. You will have the best notion I can give you of the abject state of submission to Russia to which Poland was at this time reduced, by my adding that the Russian ambassador required and obtained the signature of many of the deputies to the diet to the paper which follows :—“ I subscribe and pledge myself to Prince Repnin, ambassador plenipotentiary of her Majesty the Empress of all the Russias, and promise him that I will have no connexion or correspondence, that I will not even converse with any senator, minister, or deputy, with any ambassador, or other

foreign minister, or with any one whatever, whose sentiments are contrary to the projects proposed by the said ambassador, to be received and passed into a law in the diet. Moreover, I promise him that I will not introduce to the diet anything of all that has been enjoined and recommended in my instructions from the nobles of my district; and that, in a word, I will not oppose in any way the will of this ambassador; and in case of infraction of this engagement, I submit myself to the penalty of degradation of rank, confiscation of property, death, or any such like punishment which it may please the said ambassador to inflict."

George. And could any people be such poltroons as to be so dictated to?

Mrs. M. When people have once gone wrong, there is no saying where they will stop. Tyranny, however, so outrageous as this produces almost always what we have learned of late from our French neighbours to call a *reaction*; and at length, in February, 1768, a small number of nobles united in a confederation, called the Confederation of Bar, from the name of a small town in the Palatinate of Podolia, where they held their meeting. Their avowed object was to dethrone Stanislas, and shake off the Russian yoke. In a very short time the confederates mustered 8000 men. Other confederations were formed in aid of the perilous struggle thus commenced with the Russians, and a period of four years elapsed before

this struggle was finally over. The confederates are, of course, styled sometimes patriots, sometimes rebels, according to the different spirit or politics of the writers who speak of them.

George. And pray, Mamma, which do you call them?

Mrs. M. I am most inclined to call them patriots. The oppressions under which their country suffered were very severe, and the tyranny of Catherine quite intolerable.

The great hope of the confederates was in a war which broke out in the winter of 1768 between Turkey and Russia, and thus promised to divert the Russian arms to another quarter. In this war the Turks seemed at first to have some advantage; but in the campaign of 1770, the Russians took Bender and Ismail; and Admiral Elphinstone, a Scotch officer of great merit in the Russian service, defeated a Turkish fleet of above twenty-five ships in the straits of Scio, in the Archipelago; and those ships which escaped the action he afterwards burned in the adjoining bay of Tchesm , on the coast of Natolia. The admiral, though his fleet refused to follow him, proceeded to the Dardanelles, where he cast anchor in his single ship in defiance of the batteries, and then returned to his fleet. He had hoped to have forced the straits and bombarded Constantinople, but being in this unsupported condition, he was obliged to retire. An armistice was concluded between Russia and Turkey, May 30.

1772, and thus Russia had again the power of devoting her full force and attention to aggrandize herself at the expense of her unfortunate neighbours the Poles. In the meantime, the war of the Polish confederates, though engaged in by many of them from the noblest motives, had produced only increased calamities; chiefly, perhaps, because the leaders were at perpetual discord amongst themselves. In November, 1771, a most extraordinary attempt was set on foot by one of these leaders, whose name was Pulaski, to get possession of the king's person, with the intention of either assassinating him or of detaining him prisoner.

Richard. I think, Mamma, this was not so much the conduct of a patriot as of a rebel.

Mrs. M. It was a most unjustifiable action; but in civil wars, as in private quarrels, people, even good people, are impelled not by reason, but by their passions; and one aggression leads on to another, till they are often drawn on to commit actions which they would have revolted from in the beginning.

Mary. But did they really get the king into their clutches?

Mrs. M. You shall hear the whole story. Pulaski confided the execution of his scheme to three chief conspirators, of whom the one who acted the most material part in it was named Kosinski. These three again selected thirty-seven other persons, so as to make up in all a band of forty. These forty

associates made their way into Warsaw disguised as peasants, and driving waggons loaded with hay, under which were concealed their arms and their uniforms: this was on the 2nd of September, 1771. The next day the king went to visit his uncle, Prince Czartoriski, and set out to return to his palace at nine or ten o'clock at night. The conspirators, who were lying in wait for him, attacked his carriage, and fired several bullets into it, none of which touched the king, though some of them perforated his pelisse. His attendants fled in all directions, except one man, who was slain in attempting to defend his master. Stanislas endeavoured to save himself by jumping out of the carriage, but received a sabre wound in the forehead, and was seized by two of the conspirators, who held him between them by the collar, and spurring their horses, dragged him between them for about 500 yards. And all this passed in the streets of Warsaw, which being neither paved nor lighted, nothing was heard or seen by the inhabitants. The king, after being dragged, as I have already said, some way, was placed on horseback, and the party proceeded at a brisk pace to the outside of the city, which is surrounded by a deep ditch. In passing this ditch, the king's horse fell, and broke its leg. This, however, caused little delay; he was soon mounted on another, and they set off again. After they had proceeded somewhat further, some of the party took a sudden resolution

to ride off to inform Pulaski of their success, leaving the rest to bring up their prisoner. But before they separated, they stripped the king of almost everything he had about him, that each might have some voucher to show of their having had him in their hands.

Stanislas now found himself left with Kosinski and six more of the band, none of whom appeared to be acquainted with the country; for they wandered about during great part of the night, and yet never got to any great distance from the city. It was several times proposed amongst them, when they were completely lost and wearied, to kill their prisoner, and each ride off and look to his own safety. But Kosinski invariably opposed this bloody counsel: nay, he even showed compassion for the inconvenience which the king suffered from the wound in his head, and lent him a cap, his hat having been knocked off in the struggle when he was seized. One of his boots being torn off, he also lent him a boot. These things convinced Stanislas that the man was not without a heart; and it was an indescribable comfort to him, when, after having wandered about several hours, latterly on foot, the party having been obliged to abandon their horses and to separate, he found himself alone with Kosinski. As they sat down on the ground to rest, the king represented to him the atrociousness of the enterprise he had engaged in; and after a short conversation, Kosinski threw himself on his

knees, and declared his repentance for what he had done, and implored the king's pardon, and promised not to leave him till he had brought him to a place of safety. They were near a mill at a place called Mariemont, and to this they now turned their steps, and applied for admission; but the miller, being in no mind to be disturbed at that unseasonable hour (it was then about four in the morning), and also distrusting their appearance, which certainly, after the adventures of the night, was not prepossessing, refused at first to receive them. At last, however, he took them in, and Stanislas then wrote on his tablets, which, by good luck, had escaped the plunderers when they rifled his person, the few lines following to General Cocceii, the colonel of his guards:—“ Par une espèce de miracle, je suis sauvé des mains des assassins. Je suis ici, au petit moulin de Mariemont. Venez au plutôt me tirer d' ici. Je suis blessé, mais non pas fort.” And having, not without some difficulty, obtained a messenger by whom he dispatched this notice of his adventure, and of the place where he was, to Warsaw, he stretched himself on the floor, and exhausted by fatigue, soon fell fast asleep.

In the mean time, the king's friends in Warsaw had been in the utmost consternation. On the first alarm given by his flying attendants, many of the nobles had set off after the assassins, with the hope of rescuing him, and had found his pelisse perforated by balls, and afterwards his hat covered

with blood. Every one supposed that he had assuredly been murdered; and the whole city was in the utmost consternation. The joy and surprise when the news was received of his preservation was consequently extreme. General Cocceii instantly set off with a royal escort for the mill, where they found Kosinski with his sword drawn, keeping guard at the door, and the king asleep on the floor, covered with the miller's old cloak. You may imagine the miller's surprise at finding that the poor forlorn wanderer to whom he had been so unwilling to give shelter, was no other than the king. He fell on his knees to implore pardon for his seeming want of respect. This, as you may suppose, he readily obtained, and Stanislas also granted him a pension which made him comfortable for the rest of his life, and moreover built him a new mill.

Mary. And what became of Kosinski? I hope he too was rewarded.

Mrs. M. Stanislas gave him a pension, with which he retired to Italy, to be out of the reach of his old associates, who never forgave him for having betrayed the cause in which he had engaged.

The war of the confederates was finally broken up in the following year, by what is called the *first partition of Poland*, or the seizure, and a most unprincipled seizure it was, of many of its provinces, by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, whose united power was unfortunately too strong to be resisted.

The chiefs of the confederates dispersed into foreign countries. Pulaski went to America, and was killed in the service of the United States in the war which separated those colonies from the parent state.

Historians are not agreed whether Russia, Prussia, or Austria has the greater share to answer for of this unprincipled scheme of sharing Poland amongst them. Frederick of Prussia is commonly supposed to have been its original author. It was first discussed openly, in the beginning of 1771, between the Empress Catherine and Prince Henry of Prussia, whom the Empress had invited to Petersburgh to assist in the negotiations carrying on with Turkey; and it is believed that before the Prince's return to Berlin, the project had assumed a definite shape. The formal treaty of partition was signed at Petersburgh in the beginning of February, 1772. The troops of the three powers had already, on various pretences, taken actual possession of the greater part of the country. The confederates were routed and dispersed; their last act was to seize the town and citadel of Cracow. In this enterprise they had the help of some French auxiliaries; and having got possession of the place, they defended themselves bravely in it, but were at last obliged to capitulate. In the September following, the intended partition was announced to the king and senate at Warsaw by the Austrian ambassador. The courts of Lon-

don, Paris, Stockholm, and Copenhagen remonstrated against the usurpation, but without effect, and the Poles submitted.

George. But why did not the English send a fleet to make their remonstrances heard? Or if England chose to lie still, why did not the French come forward? They and the poor Poles had been friends of old.

Mrs. M. The councils of England were at this time in very feeble hands, and the whole attention of the Government was engaged by the quarrel about to break out with the American colonies. France also, now, in the latter part of the reign of Louis XV., was even worse and more weakly governed than England, and was moreover in a state of very great financial depression and embarrassment. There is no doubt, however, but that these powers ought to have interfered, and the rather because, if they *did not*, Sweden and Denmark must feel that they *could not*, come forward to help. By this partition Russia acquired the Palatinates of Polosk, Witepsk, and Mscislaw; Austria had Red Russia, since called Galicia, together with a part of Podolia and of Little Poland; while Prussia obtained Polish or Western Prussia and Pomerelia, with the exception of the towns of Thorn and Dantzic and their territory. Prussia obtained also a part of Great Poland, and the Palatinates of Marienburg and Culm. The portion of territory thus acquired by Russia is said to have contained 1,500,000 in-

habitants; the Austrian portion contained 2,500,000, and that of Prussia 860,000. The population of the remainder, which for the time was still left to Stanislas, was estimated at 7,700,000.

Richard. I am glad they had the grace to leave any thing; but how came the King of Prussia to come off with so much less a share than the others?

Mrs. M. His portion, though least in size, was the most valuable, and especially so to Frederick, as it connected the kingdom of Prussia with his electoral dominions in Germany.

George. But was all this done in a barefaced way, or did these great robbers pretend any right to these provinces?

Mrs. M. O, I assure you that they were all as punctilious as possible, and that each of them backed his demand, or rather his taking possession, by a sort of claim of his own. Frederick II. grounded his claim on the former union of the two countries, when Prussia was a part of Poland.

George. And so he thought it only tit for tat that Poland should now be a part of Prussia. Well, so much for his claim!

Mrs. M. The empress queen had contrived to rummage out some alleged rights, between three and four centuries old, of the crown of Hungary to the provinces claimed by her.

George. Well, to be sure, that claim had antiquity in its favour: and now for Catherine; what had she to say?

Mrs. M. She said more than all the rest; for she said that she had been at great expense in sending her troops all over Poland, to defend it from external adversaries and internal confederations, and so she claimed the provinces she now took, as an indemnification for all she had done before.

George. That was more intolerable, more insulting, than all the rest.

Mrs. M. And what made the insult still more galling, the king was required to summon a diet, that the act of spoliation might be ratified according to law. Poor Stanislas, with a heavy heart and a broken-down spirit, obeyed a command which he had not the courage, nor, indeed, the power, to resist. The diet assembled in April, 1773. A few of the members made one last struggle to avert the ruin of their country, and even the king showed more resolution in resisting his fate than seemed to be in his nature. But at length he yielded to the threat of the Russian ambassador to depose and imprison him, and to give up Warsaw to pillage. Bribes, promises, and threats prevailed also with the members of the diet: with some few to join in ratifying the dismemberment of their country, with many others to abstain from opposing it. Still, however, the partitioning powers could only obtain a majority of six in the senate, and in the diet itself a majority only of one, or of fifty-four voices to fifty-three. The partition was finally ratified August

5, 1773. Some of the nobles, in various parts of the kingdom, were still bold enough to issue manifestos and remonstrances against it, and to attempt to rouse the Poles to resistance. But it was impossible to struggle with effect against that hard law of the strongest, with which they had to contend; and at length all was submission. The treaty, however, was no sooner ratified than Austria and Prussia began to make new encroachments on the Polish territory. But on this Catherine interfered, and obliged both parties to relinquish these new usurpations. The very attempting them, it has been observed, was a plain symptom that some new agreement between the parties would alone be wanting to cause their renewal at some future opportunity.]

CONVERSATION XV.

[Years after Christ 1773—1794.]

FROM THE FIRST PARTITION OF POLAND TO THE
THIRD PARTITION.

Mrs. Markham. For some years the annals of Poland present little to record. The nobles were apparently tranquil, either submitting quietly to necessity, or else brooding in gloomy discontent over their wrongs, and on the watch for an opportunity of redressing them; whilst Catherine, not contented with the large share she had pillaged, continued to exercise a despotic sway both over the king and over the whole country. Russian troops were everywhere to be seen, acting in conjunction with the native Poles; and even at Warsaw a Russian and a Polish sentinel always stood, the one posted on the one side and the other on the other side of the city gates. The king, under these circumstances, was greatly dejected; he felt deeply his own disgrace, and the humiliation of his country, and was often heard to say, “I have always wished for the happiness of my country, and I have only caused its misfortunes.” He was also a prey to the most gloomy apprehensions (which, however, happily were not realized), as to his own fate; and

on one occasion said, in the bitterness of his heart, to Sir Thomas Wroughton, the English ambassador at Warsaw, “ Ah ! mon ami, je suis réservé pour des nouveaux et des grands malheurs. Je mourrai comme Charles Premier d’ Angleterre.” Yet, instead of endeavouring to strengthen his mind against the time of trial, or to merit the respect of his subjects, or to obtain the support of Him who alone is the certain refuge of the afflicted, his only real endeavour was to drive away all gloomy reflections, by plunging into increased dissipation ; and he continued to waste his time and exhaust his treasury in the most frivolous amusements and expenses.

In 1786, the grave closed over Frederick of Prussia and all his worldly and ambitious projects. He was succeeded by his nephew, Frederick III., who, though neither so great nor so ambitious a man as his uncle, nevertheless pursued the same line of policy with regard to Poland.

Richard. That is, I suppose, he did not like to give up what his uncle had got, and had no objection to get more if he could.

Mrs. M. Just so. In May, 1787, Stanislas and the Empress Catherine, then on her progress to visit the Crimea, which she had obliged the Turks to surrender to her, met at Kaniow. This was the only interview the king ever had with her after he was raised to the throne ; and he on this occasion laid before her some of his grievances, and more-

ever stated his apprehensions of a still further spoliation of Poland, which was thought by many to be already contemplated. He also presented a plan for some useful improvements in the conduct and constitution of the Polish government. To all this the Empress gave a ready assent, together with a solemn promise to maintain the republic as it now existed, and to guarantee its future independence. The Emperor Joseph made the same promise; but we shall soon see how these promises were kept.

On the 6th of October, 1778, a diet was assembled, which took into consideration both the foreign policy and also the changes to be made in the domestic affairs of Poland. This diet, instead of dissolving at the usual period, declared itself permanent, and at length promulgated an almost entirely new constitution, by which the *veto*, that fatal stumbling-block of all public good, was to be abolished, the condition of the peasants ameliorated, and many other great abuses were to be reformed, and finally, the crown declared hereditary, after Stanislas, in the house of Saxony. This new constitution, the formal date of which is May 3, 1791, was accepted, and formally ratified by the king, by the oaths of fidelity of the bishops, ministers, senators, and by those of all the individual members of the diet except twelve. Congratulations poured in on Stanislas from all quarters, even from the Pope himself. The new constitution was applauded in our own country, by Mr. Fox, as a work to be ap-

proved of by every friend to reasonable liberty, and it was said by Mr. Burke that “ humanity must rejoice and glory when it considers the change in Poland.” The adherents of Russia, however, and Catherine herself, were greatly opposed to this change, and so were some who were the sincere friends of their country, but who dreaded lest she should follow too closely the example of the revolution in France, and of the new constitution in that country, of 1789. Some of these recusants entered, at Catherine’s instigation, into a confederation, called, from the place of their meeting, the Confederation of Targowitz, against the new constitution. The Empress herself, also, made by her minister a formal protest against all the proposed alterations, at the same time promising pardon to those who renounced, and threatening punishment to those who persevered in adhering to them. The constitutionalists nevertheless were firm, and determined to try the fortune of the sword, rather than yield without a struggle. And Stanislas too was animated to such an unusual degree of patriot ardour, as to declare that he would put himself at the head of the army.

George. What! the king at the head of the army! I can’t imagine what sort of a general he can have been.

Mrs. M. He, perhaps wisely, did not put his generalship to any dangerous proof. His courage evaporated in a few high-sounding manifestos, and

trembling at the thought of Catherine's anger, he again bowed his head to the yoke, and on the 23rd of July, 1792, renounced the constitution of the 3rd of May, 1791, and signed the confederation of Targowitz. Thus were the hopes of Poland defeated, and the patriots, deserted by the king, were obliged to lay their swords aside for a time.

Richard. And what became of the new constitution, and all its good regulations?

Mrs. M. It vanished into air: everything was again put on its former footing; and the foundations of a temple, the first stone of which was laid amidst grand illuminations and public rejoicings to commemorate the first anniversary of the 3rd of May, was the only vestige of it that lasted much more than a year. That anniversary, as Count Oгинский remarks in his history of these events, was the last day of hope and gaiety that Poland enjoyed. In the July of the same year, the king, as I said before, abandoned her cause, and in 1793 Catherine and the King of Prussia made another (the second) treaty of partition, by which Russia advanced her frontier into the middle of Lithuania and Volhynia; and the King of Prussia took the remainder of Great Poland, and a part of Little Poland. This treaty, by which little more than about 4000 square miles of territory was left to Stanislas, was finally ratified by the diet, November 23, 1793.

But these fresh aggressions aroused anew the still

unsubdued spirit of the Poles. Without waiting to mature any plans, they again flew to arms, and appointed the justly-celebrated Thaddeus Kosciusko their generalissimo.

Richard. Kosciusko ! I am sure I have heard the name of Kosciusko often and often.

Mrs. M. It is a name never mentioned but with admiration and respect for him that bore it. He was a Lithuanian by descent (born in the year 1755), and possessed in a high degree all the finest qualities of the Polish character,—its courage, its sincerity, its warm feelings, united to strict integrity, prudence, and gentleness. He had learned the art of war under an able master, having been aide-de-camp to General Washington in the war in America. At the end of that war he returned to Poland, and was promoted by the diet to the rank of a major-general in 1789. He had greatly distinguished himself in the command of one division of the Polish army in the year 1792. When that short campaign was over, he retired to Leipsic, and was now recalled to take the command of the patriot army in the new contest which was approaching. He reached Cracow, March 23, 1794. The garrison and all the troops took an oath of allegiance to him, and a deed was drawn up by which, in imitation of the custom of the Romans in great emergencies, he was appointed *dictator*. He found the army to consist of only 4000 men ; and of these many were armed with scythes in default of other weapons. But the

numbers soon increased. The inhabitants of Warsaw, after a desperate conflict of two days (April 17 and 18), fought in the very streets, expelled the Russian troops who had possession of the city, and placed themselves under the orders of the dictator. A united army, 50,000 strong, of Russians and Prussians, was brought up in the July following, to endeavour to recover the place; but the protection of Kosciusko's army enabled the patriots to resist the enemy, who, after besieging the town for five weeks, was called off by news of some insurrections in Polish Prussia, and made a sudden and unexpected retreat. Notwithstanding this advantage on the side of the patriots, the war against the overwhelming power of Russia was too unequal to be long maintained. On the 18th and 19th of September, the Poles were defeated at a place called Krupcyzye, and thus the road to Warsaw was again opened to their enemies. On the 10th of October the patriot army again encountered the Russians, near Macieiowice. Such is the strange unpronounceable name of the place. The battle was fierce and bloody, and Kosciusko was severely wounded, and left amongst the slain. He was found and recognised by some Russian Cossacks who were pillaging the dead. They perceived that he still breathed, and they endeavoured to save him. They formed their lances into a litter, on which they laid him, and carried him to the Russian general.

George. Ah, Mamma, Kosciusko was not the first person who was so carried. Don't you remember, in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, how Lord Dacre's men brought brave Mulgrave from the field,—

“ On levell'd lances, four and four,
By turns the noble burden bore.”

Mrs. M. General Fersen, the Russian commander, ordered the noble Pole to be taken care of. His wounds were dressed, and as soon as he was able to bear the journey, he was sent to Petersburgh. Here, though imprisoned, he was treated with every consideration that his situation allowed. He had a commodious suite of apartments assigned him, and was provided with the means of beguiling the hours of his confinement by reading and drawing. When his captivity was known at Warsaw, nothing could exceed the grief and despair of the inhabitants. Men and women were seen running about the streets, wringing their hands, and dashing their heads against the walls, exclaiming, “ Kosciusko is no more, our country is lost!”

George. And what was the King doing all this while?

Mrs. M. He was a quiet spectator of the fearful contest in which his subjects were engaged with such odds against them. Kosciusko was the master-spirit that reigned during this brief struggle of expiring liberty in every truly Polish bosom. His courage, his prudence, his forethought, and the ability

which he displayed on every occasion, gained him the entire confidence of his countrymen. To all his other great qualities he also added a remarkable mildness of nature and character, of which there are many examples on record. During his short possession of Warsaw, the fury of the rabble had been provoked into outrages, on a less extensive scale, but of the same bloody sort, with some of the worst crimes of the French revolution. "See," was on this occasion the lamentation of Kosciusko; "see what tragic events have passed almost under my eyes! The day before yesterday will be an indelible stain on our revolution, and I can declare to you that the loss of two battles would have done us less harm than this unfortunate day, of which our enemies will avail themselves to excite an unfavourable opinion of us all over Europe." And, in fact, these violences did arm Catherine with what seemed in the eyes of Europe a plausible pretence for her conduct. Making the many suffer for the faults of the few, she affected to accuse the whole body of the patriots of revolutionary, and what were then commonly called French, principles. Yet surely no cause could be more just or lawful than that in which the Poles were now engaged, to cast off the usurpation of a foreign yoke, and to liberate their monarch from the thraldom in which he was held. Nor could any principles be more contrary than those of Kosciusko to that reign of license and

cruelty, which, at the time we are now speaking of, had the ascendant in France.

The first burst of grief at the captivity of Kosciusko had scarcely subsided, before the wretched Poles had fresh calamities to bewail. The Russian General Suwarrow, a man already noted for the carnage of the Turks perpetrated under his orders at the siege of Ismail, in 1790, was in junction with the army of General Fersen, and advanced to Warsaw. He first attacked Praga, a large suburb divided from the city by the Vistula, and defended by the inhabitants sword in hand with desperate but ineffectual bravery. Eight thousand men were slain in the defence, and the bridge being set on fire, the retreat of the wretched inhabitants into Warsaw was cut off. Suwarrow, on gaining possession of the suburb, put 12,000 of the inhabitants to death in cold blood. Warsaw capitulated to the conqueror November 6.

Poland was treated henceforward as a conquered country, and those patriots who could not make their escape, were either sent to Siberia, or were immured in Russian, or Austrian, or Prussian prisons. By a treaty, dated October 24, in the following year, the three powers divided amongst themselves, by a *third* partition, the whole of the territory which they had before left unappropriated. Austria took Cracow, the palatinates of Sandomir and Lublin, and the rest of the country lying be-

tween the rivers Pilica, the Vistula, and the Bug. Prussia had Warsaw and all the country to the east of that city as far as the Niemen: while Catherine, like the lion in the fable, took all the rest, which was much the largest share, to herself. And thus the third, or final, partition of Poland was consummated.

Mary. And the poor King? What became of him?

Mrs. M. He was constrained to submit to whatever conditions were imposed on him, and perhaps was thankful that these were not more severe. He was made to sign an act of abdication, and to retire to Grodno, with a pension of 200,000 ducats. Here he resided till the death of the empress Catherine, when Paul, her son and successor, sent for him to Petersburgh, and treated him with great kindness; and Stanislas, we are told, often used to declare that he felt himself more of a king at Petersburgh than he had ever done at Warsaw. He survived the empress two years, and died in 1798. Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski was never married. He had several illegitimate children, and a nephew, Joseph Poniatowski, of whom you shall hear in our next conversation.

Richard. But before we leave off now, I should like to hear something more about Kosciusko. Did he always remain in prison?

Mrs. M. One of the first acts of Paul, after his accession, was to visit Kosciusko in his prison, and tell him he was free. He also evinced his admira-

tion of his character, by making him an offer of a high military command in the Russian service, and also of a present of a sum of money and 1500 serfs. But these offers he could not prevail on him to accept.

Mary. Fifteen hundred serfs ! What could he have done with such a number ?

George. Perhaps it was to make a regiment.

Mrs. M. The way in which the value of an estate is usually measured, both in Russia and Poland, is not by the number of acres, or the amount of the rent, as in England, but by the number of the serfs on it. Therefore, in giving the number of serfs, the land is implied as a thing of course.

Mary. And did that number of 1500 serfs include the women and children ?

Mrs. M. No : I understand that, in reckoning the serfs on an estate, only the men who are capable of labour are counted ; all the rest go for nothing.

Richard. Did Kosciusko ever return to Poland, to take the command of an army there again ?

Mrs. M. He never again took any active part in the affairs of his country, though often solicited so to do : partly because he was in some measure disabled by the severe wounds he had received, and partly because he considered himself placed under an obligation to Russia on account of the benefits for which he was indebted to Paul. On leaving Pittsburgh he retired to the United States of America, where a small pension was allowed him by the

government as a remuneration of his military services under General Washington. In his way to America, he was detained some time at Bristol; and, in a book called *Literary Recollections*, Dr. Warner has given the following account of an interview he had with him there:—"I never beheld," he says, "a more interesting human figure than Kosciusko stretched upon his couch. His wounds were still unhealed, and he was unable to sit upright. He appeared to be a small man, spare and delicate. A black silk bandage crossed his fair and high, but somewhat wrinkled, forehead. He spoke very tolerable English, though in a low and feeble tone; but his conversation replete with fine sense, lively remarks, and sagacious answers, evinced a noble understanding and a cultivated mind."

Mary. Well, it is a great comfort to hear at last of a man of truly fine character amongst the Poles, for indeed there seem to have been very few that were good for much.

Mrs. M. That is rather a hasty judgment, my dear Mary. Some of the qualities of the Polish character were very noble, and many of its faults the effect of the bad institutions of the country. Under a better form of government, the people might have been wise and consistent, as well as brave and void of artifice. And I have been told by those who have travelled among them that they found many wise, accomplished, and virtuous men anxious to do all they could for their country, but

who could do nothing, and who therefore thought their post of utility as well as of honour to be in a private station ; and of such private persons, the *history* of the country, especially such a mere outline of its history as we have in these conversations, says nothing.

Mary. I remember you said, Mamma, in speaking of the last king, that he would not wear the Polish dress. I wish you would be so kind as to tell us what the Polish dress was like.

Mrs. M. The national dress of a Polish gentleman consists properly of a *zapan*, which is a sort of frock-coat made with sleeves, and usually either of yellow or red silk, and with one row of buttons. Over this frock was the *koutusz*, an over-coat of broadcloth fastened round the neck like a cloak, and having its sleeves thrown back over the shoulders and crossed behind. Round the waist was a rich belt embroidered with silver or gold, and with a deep silver or gold fringe at the ends. Large pantaloons, and half-boots of morocco leather, and of various colours, complete the dress, which, as you must perceive, is very splendid, and which, added to the tall and graceful figure of the Poles, had a very striking effect. This dress, however, which I believe has not for a long time been worn so commonly as the French and English costumes, has been of late almost entirely disused, for fear of giving offence to the Russians.

Mary. And what is the ladies' dress like ?

Mrs. M. As like *la véritable mode de Paris* as they can make it. The French are so obliging as to invent fashions for us all, from the British Channel to the Baltic.



Kosciusko.

CONVERSATION XVI.

[Years after Christ, 1795—1815.]

FROM THE THIRD PARTITION TO THE ASSUMPTION
OF THE CROWN OF POLAND BY THE EMPEROR
ALEXANDER.

Mrs. Markham. THE hope that, sooner or later, their country would be restored still clung to the hearts of the Poles ; and they now looked to France as the land whence its restoration should come. Many of the nobles opened and maintained a secret correspondence with the Directory which was established in that country in 1795, and afterwards with the consular government by which it was succeeded. Many of them also escaped to Venice, then in the possession of the French armies, or to Paris itself. In October, 1796, one of the Polish leaders, named Dombrowski, proposed to the Directory to raise a body of Polish refugees to serve in the French army against their common enemies. Several Polish legions, as they were called, were accordingly raised in the north of Italy, under the direction of Bonaparte. Those brave men, while they adopted the tricoloured cockade, preserved their national arms and costume ; and very gallant and very prodigal they were of their lives in the

campaigns which followed. In the beginning of 1798, the first legion, commanded by Dombrowski, marched into Rome. You will perhaps think it an anecdote worthy the relating, that in this expedition the Poles obtained possession of a Turkish standard and sabre, which Sobieski had sent to the Pope as trophies, after the siege of Vienna. The standard they retained to accompany their legions in their future marches, and they sent the sabre as a present to Kosciusko. In 1799, one of these Polish legions formed part of the garrison of Mantua when that city was besieged by the Russians under the command of Suwarrow. The other legion (there were now two) was nearly destroyed in the same campaign in the battles of Trebia and Novi, the latter of which was fought August 15. But such was the alacrity of spirit of this brave people, that in the course of the year following their numbers were more than replaced. The victory of Hohenlinden, December 3, 1800, is attributed in great measure to the heroic bravery of the Polish legion of the Danube. The whole body, after the peace of Luneville in 1801, mustered not less than 15,000 men; but their services and their cause were then alike forgotten by their allies. Many of them, consequently, left the French service in disgust; and the ill-fated remainder, of which Bonaparte, now first consul, was, I suppose, glad to get rid in any way, were sent with the army under General Le Clerc against the revolted negroes

in St. Domingo, where almost all who did not perish by the sword fell victims to the diseases of the climate.

A short period now succeeds, in which no material event took place in Poland; and it might have been happy if this period had lasted long enough to allow of some amalgamation of the several provinces with the Russian empire and the other states among which they had been divided. In 1801, the Emperor Paul had been murdered (the fate of so many of his predecessors), and had been succeeded by his son Alexander; and those of the Poles, and particularly the Lithuanians, who were placed under his sovereignty, began gradually to forget the lost independence of their country, and, indeed, appear to have been thankful that, as their hard fortune forbade them to be free, they had fallen to the share of Russia, instead of being put under what is agreed by all to have been the harder yoke of Prussia or Austria.

But a new series of bright but baffled expectations was again at hand. Napoleon, in his conquest of Prussia in 1806, and in his rapid advance against the Emperor Alexander in the following year, tried every art to enlist the national enthusiasm of the Poles in his cause. He raised several Polish regiments; and he even announced, with his usual insincerity, that Kosciusko was on his approach to join them, and issued a proclamation in his name. That truly honourable and indepen-

dent patriot, however, who was then in France, had refused to join in a cause in which he foresaw that his country could expect no real advantage, but was sure to be the sacrifice of the real or fancied interests of either one great power or another.

Napoleon entered Warsaw, December 18, 1806. On the 14th of June following was fought the bloody battle of Friedland, which reduced the Emperor Alexander to submission. In this battle Dombrowski and his Polish heroes greatly distinguished themselves; and on the 7th of July was concluded the treaty of Tilsit. Now was the time in which the French Emperor might have acquitted himself of his obligations to his warm and confiding allies, the Poles; but he made no effort to rescue from Russia any of the provinces which were already in its possession. He even ceded to that power a considerable district, the district of Bialystock, one of those which had been previously apportioned to Prussia; and he moreover offered to Alexander all the rest of that portion of Poland if he would join in what he called his continental system, or the exclusion of English merchandise from the continent. But Alexander, out of consideration, it is supposed, for the misfortunes of Prussia, his ally, refused this tempting boon; and consequently, Napoleon formed these provinces into a new duchy, which he called the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. This duchy, which consisted of about 2800 square leagues, was divided into six depart-

ments, Posen, Kalisz, Plock, Warsaw, Lomza, and Bydgozel, containing altogether about 4,000,000 inhabitants; and Frederick Augustus, now created King of Saxony, was made the grand duke. A new code of laws was drawn up, one of which was the abolition of serfage, and all the principal public offices were committed to Poles. Prince Joseph Poniatowski was made minister of war, and a friend of Kosciusko was made secretary of state.

The first diet under the new constitution was held March 20, 1809. In the same year the war was renewed between France and Austria, and the Poles again entered with alacrity into the cause of Napoleon. Poniatowski invaded Galicia, which in a short time was wholly in his possession. Warsaw, which had been for a time occupied by the Archduke Ferdinand, was recovered; and in July Cracow also was in the power of the Poles, who, after these successes, hoped that the friendship of Napoleon, with whom the Emperor of Russia too was now in alliance, would at least enable them to keep those portions of their ancient territory which they had thus won from the common enemy. But at the peace of Vienna, which was signed October 14th, the whole of Galicia was again torn from them, and given up to Austria; and the districts of Tarnopol and Zbazaz were ceded to Russia. Of all their conquests the Poles were allowed to retain only the districts of Cracow, Redorn, Lublin, and Siedlec, which were incorporated with the grand

duchy. This accession of territory was dearly purchased by the extreme exhaustion to which the duchy was reduced by the exertions of the campaign. Yet still it pleased and intoxicated the credulous people, who were willing to think it an earnest of the restoration of their kingdom to its ancient power and extent. But they were destined to suffer still more, and to be again deceived by their dependence on that dazzling but unprincipled conqueror, whose dominion over Europe was now almost drawing to a close, and who, indeed, had never really cared either for Poland or for its freedom, and is even said to have avowed on some occasion that his conduct towards that country was "a mere whim."

From the conclusion of the peace of Vienna, in 1809, little passed of moment in the affairs of Poland till the important year 1812, when Napoleon, flushed with his past successes, made his vain attempt to overwhelm with his armies the vast empire of Russia: 80,000 Poles, with joyful and beating hearts, hastened to join his banners. On the 26th of June, a diet was assembled at Warsaw, in which a general confederation of the Poles was decreed, the restoration of the republic declared, and an hereditary right to the crown bestowed on the King of Saxony. The Emperor of France was enthusiastically hailed as the nation's deliverer; and the French ambassador, the Abbé de Pradt, studiously introduced, by his master's orders, the

words “the *kingdom* of Poland” in a speech which he made to the assembled diet. Warsaw was one scene of festivity and of undoubting hope, and all the Poles in the Russian service were recalled. This seal for France did not extend, however, to Lithuania. The inhabitants of that duchy were in general contented with the lenient yoke of Alexander, who had permitted them to retain much of their ancient usages and constitution; and many of them also remembered that, though practically united ever since the time of Jagello, they were yet originally a different nation. They were also of the Greek Church, instead of the Roman Catholic.

Napoleon reached Wilna June 26th, and established a provisional government there. But he gained little by his sojourn in this ancient capital of the duchy. He himself was regarded with dislike and suspicion, and his soldiers, in marching through the country, treated the people more like enemies than like friends, and were, of course, so treated by them in return.

I need not here relate the particulars of the march to Moscow, the dreadful conflagration of that great city, and the no less dreadful retreat from it. The Polish forces on this signal expedition were under the command of Poniatowski, and we are told that of the 80,000 men who joined the French army in this campaign, scarcely 20,000 survived it. Poniatowski reached Warsaw with the remnant of his own division on the 25th of Decem-

ber, and in the February following marched to Cracow, but was unable to muster on his arrival there more than 3000 men. By May, he had augmented this little army to 13,000, and then, with almost a perverse fidelity, set out to join Napoleon, who was now again at the head of an army, and in Saxony. In the decisive battle of Leipsic, October 19, 1813, the Poles bore a conspicuous part. At the close of that day, so fatal to the French and their allies, the troops of Poniatowski were a part of the reserve, and were employed to cover the retreat of the French to the only bridge which was left over the Elster, one of the three rivers by which the city is environed on the north and the west. A body of Swedes (you will recollect that Bernadotte had at this time opposed Napoleon) was endeavouring to intercept the passage. Poniatowski opposed himself to them, and thus gave time to the retreating French to gain the bridge; and just as he was preparing, after having performed this service, to pass it himself, he found it gone. Napoleon, to secure his own army against further pursuit, had given too early an order to have it cut away, and this was, unluckily, done just so as to intercept the escape of his ally. A cloud of Cossacks was at this time pursuing the brave Pole, and he, having thus lost all means of escape by the bridge, galloped along the banks of the river in search of a passage, till he made his way into a garden, where the stream,

narrow though deep, appeared to afford him a chance of crossing in safety. But his horse, wounded and fatigued, was unable to surmount the opposite bank, and consequently he was drowned in making the attempt. A small monumental stone has since been placed in the garden by the Polish soldiers, in memory of their chivalrous leader, who from his courage and other fine qualities has been called "the Polish Bayard."

Faithful to the last, the few that remained of the Polish troops after the battle of Leipsic accompanied Napoleon into France. In August, 1814, they returned to Warsaw, and in their way passed through Nancy in Lorraine, and there performed a solemn funeral service over the tomb of their good king Stanislas.

George. But, Mamma, I want to know what was become all this time of Kosciusko?

Mrs. M. You remember that on the death of the Emperor Paul, he went to the United States of America. He returned to Europe in 1798, and settled in France. At the time of the invasion of France by the allied armies in 1814, he was living a retired life near Fontainebleau. We are told that a Polish regiment (this was a Polish regiment in the Russian service) was engaged in plundering the commune or district he lived in. Kosciusko rushed to the scene of disorder, and sternly reproved the officers. "And who are you," they answered, "who dare to speak with such bold-

ness to us?" "I," he said, "am Kosciusko." The effect, it is added, was electric; the soldiers threw down their arms, flung themselves at his feet, and entreated his forgiveness. About the same time, Kosciusko had also an interview with the Emperor Alexander, to whom he wrote a letter, entreating him to grant an amnesty to all the Poles, to emancipate the serfs, to take the title of King of Poland, and to grant to the country a free constitution, approaching to that of England. Alexander, in his answer, written with his own hand, promised all that he asked, and invited him to return to his country, and to be his help-mate in these labours; he had also a long personal interview with him; but Kosciusko seems to have felt that he could not bear to see unhappy Poland again, and he was, perhaps, also, the less willing to return, as he soon found that the Emperor did not intend that his countrymen the Lithuanians should partake of the constitution which he promised to Poland. In the following year he went to reside at Soleure, in Switzerland, and died there October 16, 1817, of an injury received by a fall from his horse, leaving behind him a character of glorious fame and unsullied integrity. A short time before his death, he emancipated all the serfs on his Polish estate. His corpse was conveyed to Poland, as was also that of Joseph Poniatowski; and the remains of both these heroes were interred in the cathedral of Cracow, near the honoured remains of Sobieski.

The Cracovians have also raised a monument to the memory of Kosciusko in the form of a conical mount, at some little distance from the town.

At the meeting of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Poles again believed that the moment was come when Europe would be just to their claims; and when, after so many years of disappointment, their independence would at last be restored. England also, and France, and even Austria, were sincere and urgent for its real restoration; and the latter power offered to make some sacrifices in the cause. But Alexander could not resolve to disunite from his empire either the provinces already incorporated with it, or those of the grand duchy, over which he already reigned by anticipation; and the final arrangement was, that the duchy of Warsaw was declared to be irrevocably united to Russia, but with a constitution and administration of its own, and that the emperor should take the separate title of King of Poland. With this nominal restoration the Poles were obliged to rest contented; and, indeed, many of them were really so, judging that any settled government would be better than the disorganised and uncertain state of things which they had so long groaned under. The other more material articles of the treaty of Vienna, as it affected Poland, were, that a part of the duchy of Warsaw, containing 810,000 souls, was detached from the rest, and given to Prussia, under the title of the grand duchy of Posnania;

and that Eastern Galicia and the salt-mines of Wieliczka were ceded to Austria. Cracow, with a surrounding territory of about nineteen square miles, was declared a free and independent republic, and placed under the protection of the three powers who had taken so much for themselves, and who agreed to respect its neutrality, and not on any pretence to invade its territory. On the 28th of May in this year, the King of Saxony signed a renunciation of his sovereignty over the duchy, and on the 20th of June, Alexander was proclaimed King of Poland at Warsaw. In November he made a formal entry into that city, and promulgated there the new constitution which he had promised to his Polish subjects.

By this constitution—which indeed resembled, in many parts, that which had been formed, as you have been told, by the patriots of 1791—the liberty of the press was granted, serfage abolished, and it was ordered that all public business should be transacted in the Polish language. In imitation of the old Polish constitution, a senate was instituted, which was composed of the princes of the blood royal, the bishops, palatines, and castellans. A general diet was also appointed. This diet was to consist partly of nobles elected in the dietines, and partly of deputies elected in communal assemblies, in which every proprietor of land paying taxes, even to the lowest amount, every manufacturer or shopkeeper possessed of a capital of 10,000 Polish

florins (something more than 250*l.*), all beneficed clergy, all professors, or persons charged with any office of public instruction, and even all artists distinguished for their merits, or public services, were to have votes.

Such was the constitution granted to the new kingdom of Poland by its powerful sovereign. Lithuania was still kept a distinct province, and divided into three governments, those of Wilna, Grodno, and Minsk. Posnania and Galicia had also diets granted them by Prussia and Austria.

CONVERSATION XVII.

[Years after Christ, 1815—1832.]

THE LATE REVOLUTION.

Mrs. Markham. OUR remaining attention must be now confined to that portion of the ancient Poland which, by the treaty of Vienna, and the constitution granted by Alexander, was once more restored to the name of a kingdom. The first diet was opened at Warsaw by Alexander himself, in March, 1818. The country had taken breath in the interval of repose of the two years preceding; and there is no doubt but that Alexander, a man by nature of a most humane and kindly character, was heartily desirous both to conciliate and to benefit his new subjects. The constitution which he had granted them shows also of itself how much he trusted them to themselves. And accordingly he seems to have been, for a time, extremely popular among them.

But the hope of independence, though for a time forgotten in the pleasure of a deliverance from actual suffering and oppression, began to revive. Combinations to recover the lost greatness and territory of the state were almost openly talked of and projected, and even divulged through the press.

The emperor would not, we may perhaps say *could* not, allow his authority to be thus openly disputed. The liberty of the press was suspended by an ordinance dated in July, 1819; and the Archduke Constantine, the emperor's brother, who resided at Warsaw, and who had been commander-in-chief of the Polish army ever since 1814, took many severe and injurious measures against persons suspected, though many of them were innocent, of designs hostile to Russia. A state-prison was established in Warsaw; many students in the university of that city, among whom a strong antipathy to Russia was very commonly felt, were thrown into prison; and though but few severe punishments were inflicted, yet terror, and animosity, and especially an indignation against the violences of the archduke's temper, became daily more and more general. In a diet held in 1820, a spirited opposition was made to the measures of government. No diet was then convoked till 1825. The convocation of the diet in that year was coupled with an ordinance which abolished the publicity of its debates, and several of the members were forcibly sent away from Warsaw on the night before it opened.

The Emperor Alexander died December 1, 1825. He had no children, and his next brother, the archduke Constantine, was the immediate heir to his dominions. But Constantine had, in 1823, declined the succession; and it now therefore devolved on

his younger brother, the present Emperor Nicholas. Nicholas, on the 25th of the same month, issued a proclamation to the Poles, in which he promised to preserve their constitution inviolate. On the very next day a conspiracy against him broke out in Russia, in which many Poles and Lithuanians were said, and no doubt justly said, to be concerned. Many arrests took place, above 200 in Poland and Lithuania; and eight of the principal persons accused were brought to trial, but were acquitted in 1828. On May 24, 1829, Nicholas was crowned King of Poland at Warsaw.

The following year, 1830, was the year, as you know, of the revolution of three days in Paris, and of the revolution in Belgium. The example of these events was not lost on the Poles, amongst whom the desire of becoming free from their dependence on Russia, had gone on increasing ever since the first years of the reign of Alexander. And this desire was felt most strongly among the military, who were in a great measure unemployed, and among the students in the universities. These elements of disorder were further stimulated by actual communication with the leaders of the revolution in France. The brutal temper, however, and the many tyrannical acts of the Archduke Constantine, were the direct occasion of the breaking out of the general discontent into a flame. Amongst his other violences, Constantine took great offence at the students of the military school of

Warsaw, on account of their drinking to the memory of Kosciusko, and of other popular heroes of the Polish story. The tribunal before which this offence was brought, refused to inflict any punishment for it ; and on this the exasperated Constantine ordered, on his own authority, some of the offenders to be flogged, and committed others to prison. The rest of the students, provoked by this act of tyranny, rose suddenly on the night of the 29th of November. The guard was called out to quell the disturbance ; but the Polish regiments who formed a part of it, and with whom the same spirit which had roused the young military students had, no doubt, long been working, immediately joined them. The townspeople united in the cause, and the insurgents forced their way to the arsenal, where they supplied themselves with arms. They then drove the Russian troops out of the city, and compelled them to retire to the other side of the Vistula. During the course of this warfare in the streets of Warsaw, a party was also formed to seize the Archduke Constantine in the palace of Belvedere, which is about two miles beyond the walls of the city. The assailants rushed to the palace, the Russian guard at the gate was soon overpowered, and the archduke would have fallen into their hands, had not one of his attendants, by closing a secret door, given him time to escape by a window. Thus was a revolution begun and effected in little more than twelve hours.

The first care of the revolutionists was now to form a government. General Chlopiki, in the emergency of the case, assumed the dictatorship, but he soon afterwards resigned it. The chief authority was then committed to an administrative council, consisting of five persons, of whom Prince Adam Czartoriski was appointed president.

Richard. Czartoriski! I think we have had that name before.

Mrs. M. The Princes Czartoriski were, as you must remember, candidates for the crown of Poland at the time when the favour of the Empress Catherine placed it, unhappy gift that it was, on the head of their relation Stanislas Poniatowski. The person we are now speaking of is son of Prince Adam Czartoriski, Stanislas's cousin; and it is supposed that, if Poland shall ever again be allowed to elect a king, he will be chosen.

George. And pray what are his particular claims?

Mrs. M. One is, that he traces his descent from the royal house of Jagello. Another is, that he is deservedly popular with his countrymen, on account of his talents and noble qualities, and the liberality with which he used, as long as he had the power, to dispense his princely revenues. He is also known and esteemed by our countrymen as well as by his own. He received the finishing part of his education at Edinburgh, and he is said to have valued our literature so much, that he used to expend 250*l.* a year in the purchase of English books.

George. Then I am sure he shall have my vote, and I wish he may be King of Poland to-morrow.

Mrs. M. There is little prospect, I fear, of your wish being fulfilled. The poor Poles had but a short enjoyment of their recovered independence. The Russian power was too great for them to contend with, and is now confirmed more strongly than ever. But I am not yet quite at the end of my history. The new government professed not at first any intention to throw off the connexion with Russia, but only to assert their legislative and administrative independency, under the same sovereign, as stipulated in the constitution granted by Alexander. But the recovery of their rights being refused, they unfurled again the flag of independence, and the diet declared the throne vacant by a decree of January 25, 1831. They had just before published a very able and convincing manifesto on the hardships which their country had sustained, and its claim to be free; declaring, also, that they would never lay down their arms, till they had both secured their own liberties, and recovered also the Polish provinces which had been incorporated with Russia.

But, unhappily, the question was to be decided not by reason and justice, but by the sword. The Polish army is stated to have consisted, at this time, of 30,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry. This force was notoriously too inconsiderable to contend against Russia; and though the marshal of the

diet held out an expectation of aid "from the banks of the Thames and the Seine," this expectation proved altogether vain. In the month of January, the Russian army, under the command of General Diebitsch, was assembled near Grodno. The main Polish army, under Prince Radzivil, was stationed at the same time to the northward of Warsaw, which was hastily fortified. The Russians advanced, and the Poles fell back, and concentrated themselves; and on the 20th of February a fierce, but indecisive battle was fought, in which the Russian general admitted himself to have sustained a loss of 2000 men. On the 25th, after repelling another attack from the Russians, the Polish commander retired under the fortifications of Praga, and again withdrew the same evening over the bridge into Warsaw, under the apprehension lest the approaching breaking up of the ice might carry away the bridge, which was of boats, and so cut off his communication with the city. He still maintained, however, the *tête du pont*, as it is called, or the works on the Praga side of the bridge, which commanded its passage. After this battle of the 25th, Prince Radzivil resigned his command to General Skrzyniecki. The melting of the ice, and the inundation of the river, put a stop for a time to the further advance of the Russians, and Skrzyniecki profited by the opportunity thus afforded him to recruit and equip his troops to the best of his power. On March 30th he again crossed the river,

surprised and attacked the enemy, and compelled them to fly. A partial insurrection in Lithuania took place at the same time, and brilliant hopes were for a time entertained for the Polish cause. Diebitsch was obliged to retreat, and by the end of April, the whole of the kingdom of Poland (speaking, of course, of its reduced limits) was clear of the enemy.

In the following month, however, Diebitsch advanced again, and the Poles were obliged again to retire on Warsaw. On the 10th of June the Russian general died suddenly of the cholera morbus, under the fearful visitation of which disease both armies were at this time suffering. General Paske-witch, by whom he was succeeded, crossed the Vistula in the beginning of July, below Warsaw, and established himself on the left bank of the river. On the 18th of August he had established his head-quarters within three miles of the city, under the walls of which the remains of the Polish army—the last real hope of the liberties of the country—lay encamped. Meantime the factions in the city itself, instead of being reconciled by the common danger, reached a desperate height, and the blind fury of the citizens led them to form the most unjust suspicions of the best friends of their country. Skrzynecki found himself obliged to resign his command. The populace broke open the prisons. Officers of the highest character, but who had been guilty of the crime of being unsuccessful

against an overwhelming force, were murdered in cold blood ; and even some ladies, who were confined on suspicion of being in the Russian interest, shared the same fate. A degree of order was at length restored, but it would appear as if these atrocities had terrified every one, hopeless as all resistance now evidently was, from venturing to think of any surrender. Paskewitch offered terms of surrender, but they were refused.

On the 6th of September the Russians made a furious attack on the Polish lines, which were defended no less furiously. On the following day the attack was renewed, and with still more vehemence than on the preceding day. Before evening all resistance was overborne, and Warsaw submitted. A capitulation was granted; and on the morning of the 8th the Russian army, and together with the army the Archduke Michael, entered Warsaw. The Russians themselves stated their loss, in the two days' fighting of the 6th and 7th, at no less than 3000 killed, and 7500 wounded.

In the evening of the 7th, the Polish army was permitted to retire to Plozk. One last attempt at resistance they once again were preparing to make; but finding themselves hemmed in on every side, they finally laid down their arms, and sought refuge in exile. Within a month after the surrender of Warsaw, the whole of Poland was reduced to an unconditional submission to Russia. The more recent history of the country is, that by an ukase

issued in February, 1832, the emperor has declared that Poland, though still retaining a separate local administration, shall become for the future an integral part of the Russian empire. By another act of the same date, it was declared that there shall be but one coronation of the emperor and king, which shall take place at Moscow, in the presence of deputies from Poland, "as from other parts of the empire." There was no longer to be a separate Polish army. The use of the Polish language was prohibited in the public acts of Lithuania and of some other provinces. The University of Warsaw was abolished, and the most valuable part of its library, and other collections, removed to Pittsburgh: and other measures were also taken to destroy, as far as possible, the *nationality* of the Poles. An amnesty of political offences was granted, but with many exceptions.

Mary. And what became of the poor people who were excepted?

Mrs. M. Most of them, I am glad to say, made their escape to foreign countries, many of them to our own, where they justly demand, and, I hope, have very generally obtained, the sympathy and relief due to their misfortunes. Prince Czartoriski and the other members of the government of 1830 have been sentenced to death by an extraordinary tribunal instituted by Nicholas to try the principal actors in the revolution of that year. But of the persons thus condemned, only one had ventured to

remain in Poland, or been prevented from leaving it; and he, it was hoped, would receive the Emperor's pardon. The same sentence was pronounced on the military students who were foremost in the attack on Constantine at the palace of the Belvedere. But I have not heard that it has been put in force. Prince Czartoriski was not long ago living in Paris. His large estates in Russian Poland have been confiscated, but he still retains a small portion of his property, which is in Galicia. Among the severities said to have been exercised by the authority of Nicholas on persons of inferior rank, or of less prominence, he has been accused of transporting large bodies of the population of Wilna, of Podolia, and of other provinces, to colonize the steppes of the Ukraine, and to have banished 40,000 landowners to the Caucasus. But these charges have been officially denied, and I hope, therefore, that we may at least be allowed to suspect them of much exaggeration. I cannot myself venture to pronounce on them, or to detail to you any further particulars.

Richard. But before you have quite done, there are a few more things that I wish to ask you about. In the first place, I want to know which was considered as the proper capital of Poland, Cracow or Warsaw?

Mrs. M. Cracow was the ancient capital, and so continued till the reign of Sigismond III., who first made Warsaw a royal residence, and the seat of

government. Yet Cracow still continued to support, in some degree, its former dignity: with the exception of the two Stanislases, the Kings of Poland were always crowned there; and there, also, their remains were deposited. It is now a very deserted-looking place. Mr. Webster, an English traveller, who was there in 1825, says that the houses are falling into decay, and the streets crowded by a wretched, squalid population, "presenting," he adds, "a scene of dilapidation and misery never to be forgotten." Warsaw contains many fine public buildings and private palaces, but much intermingled with mean and wretched habitations. I have been told that all the houses are numbered in one series throughout the whole city, beginning with the king's palace, which is number one.

Mary. Have you no pictures, Mamma, or views in Poland to show us?

Mrs. M. I am sorry for your sake, my dear little girl, that I have nothing of the kind with which to enliven my little history. You know already that Poland is a very tame and level country throughout; and I suppose, also, from all the descriptions of it which I have read, that it contains very little of anything that can please the eye or give subjects to the painter. Mr. Coxe says, of the road from Cracow to Warsaw, a distance of 258 miles, that "there is not a single object throughout the whole tract which can for a moment draw the attention of the most inquisitive traveller. The

country, for the most part of the way, was level, with little variation of surface ; it was chiefly overspread with vast tracts of thick, gloomy forest ; and even where the country was more open, the distant horizon was always skirted with wood. The trees were mostly pines and firs, intermixed with beech, birch, and small oaks. The occasional breaks in the forest presented some pasture-ground, with here and there a few meagre crops of corn. Without having actually traversed it, I could hardly have conceived so comfortless a region.” Dr. Granville, a traveller of the present time, gives much the same account of the part of Poland which he passed through in coming from Courland. “ Nothing,” he says, “ that I have seen anywhere else in Europe can give an idea of the wretched state and condition of the towns and villages we passed through.” Yet even here intellect has made an attempt at marching ; in a wretched hovel, called a post-house, at which he stopped on his journey, Dr. Granville found the novel of Guy Mannering translated into Polish.

George. You mentioned something about some salt-mines ; pray, will you give us some account of them ?

Mrs. M. They are situated about eight miles from Cracow, near the Carpathian mountains, and are excavated in what appears to be a solid mass of salt. It is not exactly known when they were first worked, but they are first mentioned in the Polish

annals about 1237. At the time when Mr. Coxe visited them in 1778, they had been worked about 600 years; the depth was 743 feet, the length 6691, and the breadth 1115. You might have fancied yourself in an underground fairy palace, composed of many vaulted chambers connected by long galleries or passages, and some of these chambers were formed into chapels, having the altars, crucifixes, and statues all of salt: and what is very extraordinary, the whole of this subterranean palace of salt is as dry and as free from moisture as if it had been built aboveground of the usual materials. The surrender of these mines to Austria is a serious loss to Poland, as they produced a considerable revenue.

Richard. By the bye, Mamma, what sort of money have they in Poland? That was one of the questions I wanted to ask you.

Mrs. M. Russian coin is the money most current in Poland, and the Polish is beginning to be very rare, though the prices of commodities are still calculated by it.

George. As that old woman at the cottage on the heath told us yesterday that she sold her walnuts at a *groat* a score.

Mrs. M. The three principal of the Polish coins are the *zloty*, the *zlotowka*, and the *grosz*. The two first are silver; the *zloty* is equal to the *gulden*, or *silver florin*, and is worth about 6*½d.*; the *zlotowka* is worth two *zlotys*, and the *grosz* is a copper coin, of which thirty are equal to one *zloty*.

Mary. And now, I suppose, Mamma, we have finished all about the Poles ; and I hope you will not be displeased with me for saying that, of all the histories you have told us, I like this the least. I never like stories that end ill.

Mrs. M. The great misfortune of Poland was her elective monarchy. To this may be traced her political debasement, and also many of the national faults of the people. I have told you that they had a popular proverb, that “ every Pole is born to the throne.” Each felt that he was eligible to it ; and the pride of this feeling gave birth to an habitual resistance to authority, and to perpetual dissensions and quarrels. Mr. Burke, in a pamphlet published in 1796, speaks of Poland as having had “ a king without authority, nobles without union or subordination, a people without arts, industry, or commerce, or liberty : no order within, no defence without.” Can we be surprised that a country and a people so circumstanced should fall into ruins ? If the history is not so entertaining as I could wish it to be, you must remember that we do not read history so much for amusement as for instruction ; that we may judge of the present, and look forward to the future, by what we learn from the past, and see the order of God’s providence in the events of the world. And from this history we may more especially learn that consistency and prudence are as necessary for the well-being of states as for the well-being of individuals.

Richard. And I can't give up hoping that the Poles themselves will learn this lesson as well as we, and that they will be at last rewarded by seeing their country restored under a good government like our own.

Mary. And above all, with a nice, comfortable, hereditary king, such as we have.

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THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and SONS,
Stamford Street.

